

by Kenneth Ingram

THE NIGHT IS FAR SPENT

SEX MORALITY TOMORROW

GUIDE TO THE NEW AGE

CHRISTIANITY—RIGHT  
OR LEFT?

TAKEN AT THE FLOOD

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KENNETH INGRAM

YEARS  
OF CRISIS

*An Outline of  
International History*

1919-1945

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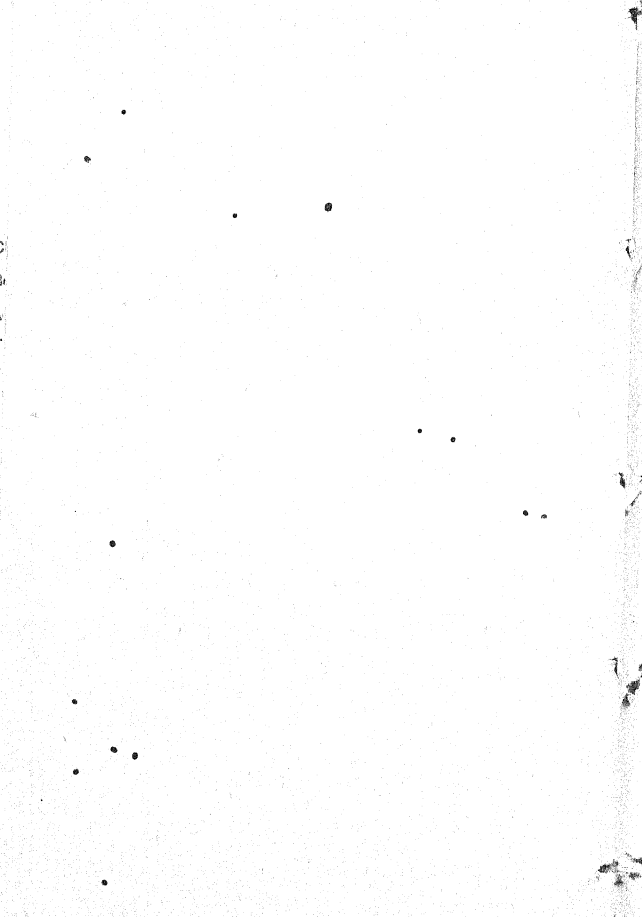
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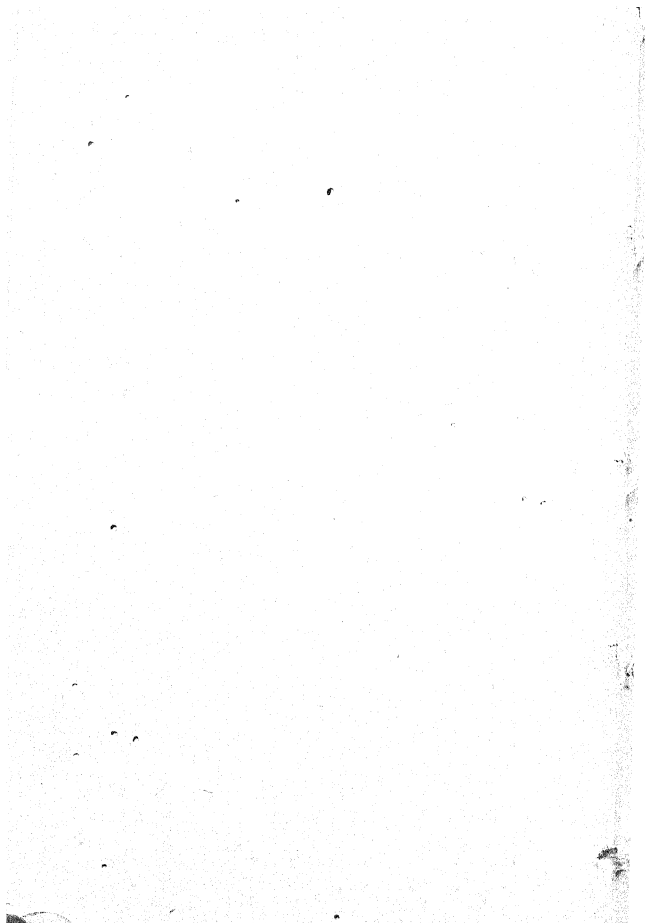
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PART ONE  
BETWEEN THE WARS



## CHAPTER 1

### THE POST-WAR SETTLEMENT IS DRAWN UP

#### *Background of the Peace Conference*

THE period between 1918 and 1939 will be regarded by the historian of the future as invested with an extraordinary significance. He will realise that these are the years when a serious attempt was made to bring security to the world, and he will ask why this attempt should have proved so ignominious a failure, leading finally to the catastrophe of a second war. He will also realise that this is the kind of question which cannot be answered by simple and single explanations. It is not enough to claim, as some people too easily assume, that the failure was due to the decision of the Allies to conclude the Armistice prematurely, before Germany was sufficiently crushed: or, conversely, that she was treated too harshly; that the League of Nations was an impracticable ideal: or that the League would have provided the remedy had not the victorious Powers been disinclined wholeheartedly to make use of it. Some of these contentions may be comparatively justified. But history is a net-work of issues, and historical problems such as these are far too intricate to lend themselves to the type of rough-and-ready analysis which dogmatically minded people love to apply. The causes which produced the 1939 disaster do not lie conveniently near the surface. We shall have to weigh carefully and judicially the evidence which the events of these crucial years present, and only when we consider that we are in full possession of the relevant facts form our conclusions.

There is no doubt whatever that in 1918 the prevailing desire on the part of all the nations was to find a way of establishing permanent peace. The belligerent countries had emerged from an exhausting and devastating struggle: they had experienced the grim realities of the horrors of modern warfare. None of the neutrals had been unaffected by the upheaval and they were soon to be affected more

intimately by post-war dislocation. The motive for discovering a lasting settlement was therefore genuine enough, but from the first we can discern two distinct and largely conflicting theories as to how that settlement could be reached. The former of these theories was based on the belief that Germany was the sole guilty party, that she alone constituted the menace of war, and that she must therefore be reduced to utter impotence. This standpoint was represented mainly in French political circles. President Poincaré took the extreme view that Germany must be virtually wiped off the map, and Premier Clemenceau, though slightly less rigid in his opinions, advocated a wholesale disarmament of the enemy forces and territorial dismemberment. In Britain a general election had been won by Mr Lloyd George on the strength of the policy advocated by Lord Northcliffe: Germany must be bled white, she must pay to the "last farthing" for the damage she had caused to the devastated areas. A wave of indignation was sweeping across Britain which in its more extravagant forms expressed itself in such demands as that the Kaiser should be brought to trial and hanged. No one who glances through the columns of the leading English newspapers at the time of the Armistice can fail to observe the symptoms of an abnormal emotion which was infecting even those in responsible authority, which was certainly reflected by the majority in the new House of Commons, and which no doubt was itself a result of the strain and privation of the war-years.

We are bound to recognise how deeply this trend of emotional bitterness and disillusionment coloured the British political outlook in the Armistice period. In France, this same attitude was due perhaps less to emotional tendencies than to an uncompromising and calculating realism. This was not the first time that France had experienced the impact of the ruthless Prussian war-machine. To men like the veteran Clemenceau it was desperately necessary to deliver a final knock-out blow to Germany now that she lay prostrate; and unless we are able to appreciate the solid reasons for this standpoint we shall fail to understand the fundamental antagonism between it and the body of opinion which supported President Wilson and the Fourteen Points. This rival body of opinion was no less widespread. It had

found expression in the British Labour Party's peace manifesto of 1918 and in a small book which Mr H. G. Wells<sup>1</sup> had written earlier in the year. It was significant that when Woodrow Wilson landed in England, and whenever indeed he appeared in public, he was given by the war-weary crowds an enthusiastic demonstration. He was greeted no less fervently as the prophet of a new world by the crowds in Paris. But his authority rested on much more than popular acclamation. The principles which he had been enunciating since January 1918 had been accepted by the German Government under Prince Max of Baden in October. The enunciation of these principles had encouraged Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria to surrender unconditionally. They had led the Serbs, the Croats, the Czechs and the Slovenes to revolt against the imperialism of Vienna. The Allies, with certain reservations, had expressed their willingness to make the Fourteen Points the basis of a peace-settlement, and it was largely in the belief that this would be the nature of the treaty which had encouraged the enemy to sue for peace rather than prolong a hopeless but desperate resistance.

It is possible for us, at this distance of time, to perceive how radically incompatible were the Wilson policy and the idealistic opinion which supported it with the standpoint which regarded a complete subjugation of Germany as the prime necessity. Many of the Fourteen Points and the 'Principles,' 'Ends' and 'Particulars' which accompanied them were framed in such general terms that they could be subjected to very different interpretations; but the liberalism which they expressed was obvious enough. The main features of the Points were that covenants of peace should be 'openly arrived at': that there should be absolute freedom of navigation outside territorial waters both in peace and war: that all economic barriers between the nations should be removed: that 'adequate guarantees' should be 'given and taken' so that national armaments should be reduced 'to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety': that there should be 'free and impartial adjustment of colonial claims' on the principle 'that the interests of the populations must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be

<sup>1</sup> *In the Fourth Year of the War.*



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determined': that all Russian territory should be evacuated and the Soviet Republic given 'unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy, as well as welcomed into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing' (her treatment by other nations being the 'acid test' of their goodwill): and that there should be set up 'a general association of nations under specific covenants.' The other Points referred to specific territorial adjustments, including the restoration of Belgium, Alsace-Lorraine, the Balkan States, a readjustment of Italian frontiers 'along clearly recognisable lines of nationality,' 'secure sovereignty' for the Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire, and Polish independence with access to the sea.

The Allies are sometimes accused of having formally assented to the Points and then of violating many of their essential conditions. It must be remembered, however, that when President Wilson replied to the Austrian and German overtures for peace, on September 15th and October 4th respectively, he reminded both these Governments that since the Fourteen Points had been drafted subsequent events had modified them. The Allies unreservedly ruled out the claim of freedom of navigation, and had also insisted on November 5th that there must be 'restoration' by the enemy of all invaded territory, and that such 'restoration' must be taken to mean compensation for all damage caused by the aggression of Germany by land, sea and air. Germany had unreservedly accepted the Wilson qualifications on October 12th. Meanwhile, the provisions regarding Austria-Hungary were nullified by the fact that before the armistice-terms had been negotiated that empire had broken up. The Allies had no longer to deal with a single enemy Power in the case of Austrian territory, but with seven legates, Italy, Serbia and Rumania among them. The case of Rumania surely deserves a special mention. Having followed a military strategy of her own, against the advice of the Allied Command, she had been soundly beaten by Germany and compelled to capitulate. Two days before the Armistice she re-declared war on Germany and was thus enabled to appear at Versailles in the role of gallant victor.

Still, however vague and however amended the Points, the Wilsonian principle embodied a conception of a world-order far in advance of anything which had as yet been propounded by a responsible statesman: and it was this vision of a new world which stirred the emotions of the multitudes. What they imperfectly appreciated, and what President Wilson certainly failed to realise, was the inherent antagonism of these ideas to the policy for which Poincaré and Clemenceau stood. Wilson seems to have been entirely unaware of the opposition which he would have to encounter. Most Englishmen in that winter of 1918 probably believed that it would be possible to make Germany pay to the last farthing, to crush her financially and politically, and yet at the same time to build up a system which must depend on the co-operation of every national Government—on the goodwill of the defeated Powers, that is to say, just as much as upon the integrity of the Allies.

Woodrow Wilson lost the first round of the contest. The Peace Conference met on January 18, 1919, in Paris—on Poincaré's own ground—a fatal choice for Wilsonian purposes. No representative of Germany or of her defeated allies was summoned, and Russia was similarly excluded. It was evident at the outset that little progress would be made if the delegates of the fifty-three Allies and Associated Powers were to debate each issue in public. A Council of Ten was therefore entrusted with the task of drawing up the treaties, consisting of the premiers and foreign ministers of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. In effect, therefore, Wilson's first Point which insisted that the covenants of peace should be 'openly arrived at' was thrown overboard. The real work was to be carried out behind closed doors.

The moment that the Council settled down to its labours it was clear that the agenda raised many highly controversial problems, and Wilson began to realise the enormous difficulties which lay in his path. He therefore changed his tactics and pressed for an immediate consideration of the last Point—the creation of a League of Nations. Unfortunately, although a far-sighted theorist, he soon realised that he had no proposals to offer as to the practical form such a league should take. Colonel House, his assistant, presented the scheme for an international secretariat, which

should serve as a clearing-house for international reforms, as well as the establishment of a permanent Court. General Smuts pressed for a 'mandate' system of administering colonies. Lord Robert Cecil added a clause which gave the Great Powers a majority on the League Council. Léon Bourgeois advocated an international army, but this proposal was rejected.

Wilson, however, succeeded in his main purpose: the 'Covenant' of the League was accepted by the Conference. On February 14, 1919, he left Paris for four weeks. In his absence it was decided that even the Council of Ten was too unwieldy, and a smaller body, consisting only of Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Orlando—the Italian prime minister—was substituted. The effect of this reconstitution was to place Clemenceau much more in the centre of the picture than before. Wilson and Lloyd George could speak no French, Orlando could speak no English: but Clemenceau spoke both French and English. Moreover, Wilson betrayed an amazing ignorance of European geography: he apparently thought that Prague was in Poland, and he certainly imagined that the Southern Tyrolese were Italian. It is, indeed, one of the major tragedies of Versailles that Wilson's personality was so ill-equipped for the role of prophet. Clemenceau openly despised him as a sentimental romanticist. Wilson's mind worked slowly and he was so contemptuous of compromises that he would often prove unreasonably obstructive on unimportant issues. He stood very much on his dignity when he was opposed. A contemporary journalist has described him as having "the glacial geniality of a head-master receiving his assistants on the first day of a new term."

Clemenceau, on the other hand, held most of the trump-cards and played them ably. He knew exactly what he wanted, and had ready by his side all the practical details required for the fulfilment of his aims. He wanted an old-fashioned victor-and-vanquished treaty, such as Germany herself would have imposed and had indeed imposed on Russia at Brest-Litovsk. He suspected Wilson's sentimentalism as an influence which would result in leniency towards the enemy and thus enable the enemy to play havoc with Europe when the opportunity again arose. Clemenceau,

moreover, was cute enough to realise that Wilson was in one respect in an extremely weak position: the American Congress would never tolerate any commitments on the part of their President which would involve the United States in serious European obligations. Clemenceau had also put Wilson in his debt by supporting him against a scheme of Marshal Foch to march through Germany against Russia. He had supported Wilson even further by turning down Poincaré's proposal for the creation of a buffer State in the Rhineland. Clemenceau had also a hold over Lloyd George. The British Prime Minister had been returned to power at the 1918 Election expressly on the programme of relentless financial pressure on Germany. There was no doubt as to the mood of the new House of Commons, and this fact, Clemenceau reckoned, should effectually prevent any tendency on the part of Lloyd George to advocate a policy of undue liberalism. Orlando, as representative of Italy, was interested primarily in the satisfaction of his own country's claims. He was therefore largely in Clemenceau's pocket, for, if Italy was to receive her share of the plunder, it must be the stern French policy which prevailed and not the idealism of the American President, who might well be prepared to squander the spoils in the interests of his visionary schemes.

Italy, indeed, proved to be a serious obstacle in Wilson's path. His programme, as we have seen, included the principle of open covenants, and therefore a renunciation of the old method of hidden diplomacy and secret treaties. But on his arrival in Paris he learnt for the first time that the Allies had already compromised themselves by signing the secret Treaty of London in 1915. The Allies had, in fact, bribed Italy to enter the war by offering bigger prizes than the Central Powers were prepared to give. Germany had promised her only a further part of the Trentino: but the London Treaty allotted her a full share of the Trentino, the Tyrol as far as the Brenner, Trieste and Istria, the Dalmatian coast except Fiume, and a share in both the Turkish Empire and the German colonies in Africa.

We shall have occasion presently to consider further the effect of these offers on subsequent Italian policy. But at the moment it may be well to pause here so as to form a clear mental picture of this opening scene in the international

drama. The four chief actors dominate the scene, for they had been entrusted with no less a task than that of laying the foundations of the post-war world. As we form our picture we can hardly fail to reflect that this was a setting far from favourable for the achievement of the order which Wilson had vaguely envisaged. The setting was that of a chamber with locked doors. The atmosphere was riddled with intrigue. The builders of the new order which was, in Wilson's words, 'a world made safe for democracy,' were animated by no common enthusiasm: they were the protagonists of two fundamentally antagonistic conceptions. Clemenceau's was the more powerful personality: Wilson was too weak and too ill-equipped with the necessary information to put up an effective resistance. A new world requires a revolution, but the revolution was not as yet even on the horizon. Pre-war statesmen and traditional ideas were still in the saddle.

### *Effect of the Peace Settlement on Germany and Russia*

The task which confronted the Peace Conference was more colossal than any agendas which previous peace conferences had had to face. In addition, those who were responsible for redrawing the map of Europe were conscious of a desperate need for haste. Armed forces were at large in the central and eastern portions of the continent, establishing *de facto* frontiers. No less than twenty-three wars were being waged. An influenza epidemic, thriving on starvation and semi-starvation conditions, was raging over large areas of the continent. This situation could only, it was felt, be relieved by the publication of the peace terms at the earliest possible moment. The incentive to hurry played further into the hands of the French statesmen. For, if the terms of peace were to be drafted rapidly, it was the concise French plan which offered itself as the remedy rather than the endless delays which would be occasioned if the Wilsonian proposals were to be considered adequately.

It will be more convenient to refer to these chaotic conditions in greater detail when we come to consider the effect of the treaties upon the various countries concerned. But it is necessary to note at once two features of Allied policy during the Armistice period which were to react

heavily on subsequent history. The first of these is that the Allies continued to enforce the blockade, even though hostilities had ceased and there was little fear that either Germany or Austria could reopen the struggle. In Germany, as a result of the continued blockade, there were few fats available. An independent Danish commission estimated that in Germany alone, no less than 70,000 deaths occurred during 1919 from starvation. When the Poles occupied Posen it was found that the sugar-supply had entirely failed. Nevertheless, a British military order was issued, forbidding the soldiers of the Army of Occupation to share their rations with the starving civilians. General Plumer, it should be recorded, refused to enforce this order.

The other important feature of Allied armistice-policy is that war was actively waged on the Soviet Union of Russia. That war continued throughout 1919 and 1920. British and American troops were dispatched to Murmansk and Archangel in the north: Czechs, Americans and Japanese reinforced Admiral Koltchak in the east, and the French in Odessa assisted General Denikin's anti-Red expedition in the south. All these offensives were ultimately defeated by the Soviet forces. In 1920 the French sent General Weygand to lead the Poles against the Russian counter-attack and supplied Poland liberally with munitions. The British Government would similarly have assisted the Polish campaign, had not British dockers refused to load the *Jolly George*, a ship bound for Poland with British munitions.

This calculated aggression on the part of the Allies against Russia is significant. Russia had not been guilty of any hostile act against them, nor did she apparently threaten any such offensive designs. The Allied policy was excused on several grounds, such as that the Bolsheviks were German agents—although German soldiers were sent to Finland to fight the Red Army, and, in any case, Germany was already vanquished. There were also complaints that the revolutionary Government refused to acknowledge financial claims in favour of the Allies, accepted under the Czarist regime, or to prevent the armaments which had been poured into Russia from Britain prior to the revolution from passing into German hands. The real and admitted motive, however, was the fear of Communism, a fear which led the Allies thus deliberately and violently to attempt to interfere with

Russia's internal development. In its first years, therefore, the Russian revolution had to contend against a ring of bitterly hostile neighbours, and the course of the revolution was considerably affected by this fact. How directly the Allies were violating the Fourteen Points in this respect will be appreciated when we recall that they had accepted the principle laid down in Point Six, which declared that Russia should be welcomed into the League, her territory evacuated, and her Government to be given "unhampered opportunity" for the "independent determination of her own political development." Instead of this, Russia did not become a member of the League until 1934, her territory was invaded by the Allies by at least five military expeditions, and war was made on her precisely in order to prevent the "independent determination of her own political development."

Meanwhile, the work of drawing up the peace-terms for Germany proceeded. Wilson found on his return to Paris that Lloyd George was prepared to give him more active support than previously in opposing Clemenceau. On March 25, 1919, Lloyd George produced\* a memorandum proposing a scheme of general disarmament. Clemenceau, however, was still able to confront Wilson with the threat of the Monroe Doctrine, and Wilson felt that he was placed in a terribly difficult position. If he pressed too far for an amelioration of the German terms he would almost certainly find that he was committing America to responsibilities in Europe, and Congress would reject the League. To save the League he believed that he must allow Clemenceau to have his way. He was weakened at this time by a severe attack of influenza, and it was apparently in this state of physical debility that he unconditionally put his signature to the draft-treaty.

\* The German plenipotentiaries were summoned to Versailles in May. They had no idea whatever as to the terms of the treaty. Their leader, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, imagined that a general Congress would be held at which the proposals would be fully discussed. Instead, they were presented with an ultimatum. The plenary conference of the representatives of the Allies and the Associated Powers was itself shown the draft only twenty-four hours before the Germans arrived, so that it was given little opportunity

to digest its terms. Clemenceau delivered a brief and vindictive speech at the Trianon Palace, fixing the whole guilt of the war on Germany. In a dignified reply Brockdorff-Rantzau declared that "hundreds of thousands of non-combatants have perished since November 11th by reason of the blockade," "killed," he said, "with cold deliberation after our adversaries had conquered and victory had been assured them." "Think of these victims," he concluded, "before you speak of guilt and punishment."

His speech was received in frigid silence as an irrelevant impertinence, and the terms were presented for signature. Under these terms Germany lost an eighth of her former territory in Europe and a tenth of her former European subjects. France was to receive not only Alsace-Lorraine but the rich Saar coalfield "in full and absolute possession," though Lloyd George subsequently forced the concession that the Saar should be placed under League control until 1935, when a free plebiscite of the inhabitants should decide its future. Poland was to receive Posen and West Prussia.

Czechoslovakia was to be given part of Upper Silesia, and the rest of this industrial district was to go to Poland—though, here again, Lloyd George secured an amendment permitting a plebiscite. The districts of Eupen-Malmédy were to decide by vote whether to be placed under Belgian or German control. Danzig and Memel-land were not to be allowed a plebiscite but to be administered under a League Commission.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Germany was to lose all her colonies and overseas concessions. She was to surrender most of her merchant fleet, and the control of her navigable rivers was to be placed in the hands of International Commissions. Her army was to be limited to 100,000 and her navy to 15,000 men. Although heavily denuded of her previous economic resources she was to pay a sum, the total of which was unspecified, by way of reparation. By May 1921 she would be due to pay £1,000,000,000—the further amounts to be decided by a Reparation Commission which would be independent of the League.

<sup>1</sup> The method by which the Malmédy vote was taken was severely criticised on the ground that there was no secret ballot. Lithuania seized Memel, and the Allies decided to accept the *fait accompli*. The Upper Silesian plebiscite was taken in March 1921, 40 per cent. voting Polish and 60 per cent. German. Poland was, quite fairly, given one-third of the land, but this included about five-sixths of the industrial area.



As a guarantee of this payment all German territory west of the Rhine, with bridgeheads, would be occupied by Allied troops for a period of fifteen years, Germany paying the cost of their maintenance. The left bank of the Rhine was to be demilitarised and a specified district on the right bank, as well as the Saar Basin, to be ceded to France for fifteen years. There were other minor provisions concerning the Luxemburg Customs Union, Slesvig, etc.

Five days were allowed to Germany to consider this ultimatum. Brockdorff-Rantzau hurried back to Weimar to advise the German Government to play for time: the Allies, he said, would soon be at loggerheads over the division of the spoils. Erzberger, however, and most of the German ministers were afraid of what Foch would do if they hesitated, and on June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was formally signed.

Those who adopt the French standpoint and hold that in general the settlement enabled Germany to escape too easily, those who believe, in other words, that security could have been obtained by a ruthless suppression of the enemy, can hardly complain of the actual terms imposed on Germany. The Versailles Treaty, as apart from the Covenant of the League embodied in it, and with a few minor modifications, represented all that France had claimed in respect to the humiliation of her foe. Clemenceau had gained almost everything. Nor can it be denied that Germany, if victorious, would have exacted equally rigorous terms, though their own terms could hardly have exceeded Versailles in economic severity. Dr Seton-Watson,<sup>1</sup> while disclaiming the argument that, because the peace-conditions were imposed, their authority was invalid, remarks that "the real argument against Versailles is . . . that the German Government—and this not the Government which had made the war, but one which held office by reason of the overthrow of the old regime— . . . was excluded from the preliminary discussions and negotiations and treated with insult and ignominy such as every German was bound to resent." The financial provisions were indefensible from any angle. As Lord Keynes<sup>2</sup> remarks, "the economic claims against Germany were impossible of payment, and the attempt to enforce them" proved "ruinous to Europe."

<sup>1</sup> *Britain and the Dictators.*

<sup>2</sup> *Economic Consequences of the Peace.*

He regards the total sum "as double the highest figure any competent person here or in the United States of America has ever attempted to justify."

It remains to conclude this section of the story with mention of the tragic end of the man who had hoped to build a new order. President Wilson left Paris soon after the Versailles Treaty had been signed. He never returned to Europe. He was met in his own country by a storm of resentment, due largely to the fear that he, as President, was now regarded by the peoples of Europe as a dictator of the peace. America who, for the first time in her history, had come through war as a creditor-nation, to the extent of ten thousand million dollars, was determined not to be involved in any fresh sacrifices. In particular, Article X of the Covenant, which implied an obligation on the part of all members of the League to assist in overcoming aggression, was vehemently criticised. Congress accordingly refused to allow America to enter the League. The Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles, and Wilson felt that all his labours had been spent in vain. He had a stroke and remained a complete invalid for the rest of his term of office, which ended in May 1921.

### *Europe and Asia Minor*

We can now complete this preliminary survey by taking a general glance at the remaining provisions of the settlement. Austria suffered heavily, not because of any desire on the part of the Allies to single her out for harsh treatment, but as a result of applying Wilson's principle of 'autonomous development' to the ruins of the Hapsburg empire. The independence of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the separation of the Croats, Serbs and Slovenes, as well as the pledges to Italy, left Austria with the city of Vienna, a strip of the Danubian plain and a large area of the Eastern Alps. Austria, thus reduced to a quarter of the size of the former Austrian portion of the Dual Monarchy, was shorn of most of her agricultural and all her rich industrial resources. The luxury manufacturers of Vienna were excluded from the newly-formed countries by high tariffs. Austria's economic future must, thus, in any case have been doomed: she was top-heavy, a country consisting of a large capital

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supported only by ranges of wooded mountain-land. As an entirely German population her only hope lay in union with Germany, but this hope was quashed by the Allies in the Treaty of St Germain-en-Laye (September 10, 1919) which provided that she should "abstain from any act which might directly or indirectly or by any means whatever compromise her independence." Austria was thus inevitably and rapidly reduced to bankruptcy and became an economic liability which recoiled on the heads of those who had helped to bring her to this pass.

Hungary was partitioned under the Grand Trianon Treaty (June 4, 1920). Her territory was reduced from 125,000 square miles to 35,000, and her population from twenty-one million to eight million. Her population had been 54 per cent. Magyar. More than a third of these people were handed over to the foreign rule of Czechoslovakia and Rumania. She lost Transylvania and Fiume—her one outlet to the sea—and soon found herself in the position of having a surplus of wheat, which she could market only in a world already overstocked with grain.

The other dissatisfied nation was Italy, an ally who had lost 700,000 men in the fighting, although she had proved a liability rather than an asset both to the Allied naval and military command. The Allies, as we have seen, were already committed to her by the secret Treaty of London. Some of these provisions were observed, at the cost, indeed, of handing over a quarter of a million German Tyrolese to Italian rule. The port of Zara and Lagosta were given her, but not the rest of the Dalmatian coast; nor Fiume, which she specially coveted, part of that population being Italian. She was not given the Albanian protectorate, nor were any of the colonial mandates assigned to her. When these decisions became known Orlando left the Council of Four in a fit of rage. Dr Seton-Watson<sup>1</sup> blames the Allies for having undertaken commitments to her of a blatantly imperialistic nature "which could not be reconciled with their public pledges, yet they were not prepared to take the only honourable course, namely to provide the compensation to which Italy was legally entitled out of their own property, instead of that of others. . . . No amount of inept and selfish statesmanship on the part of Sonnino

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

and Orlando could justify the 'raw deal' to which her allies subjected Italy." The consequence of this policy was also to have a serious effect on the course of post-war history. Italy had joined the ranks of the dissatisfied Powers.

Those nations which were in general the gainers by the new settlement were the Poles, the Czechs, the Serbs, the Greeks and the Rumanians. Rumania by obtaining Transylvania and the Banat of Temesvar, by retaining Southern Dobrudja (which has a Bulgarian majority) and by seizing Bessarabia from Russia, more than doubled her area.

The reconstitution of Asia Minor was perhaps the most difficult of all the problems which the Allies had to face. Turkey, although losing under the Treaty of Sèvres (August 1920) all her outlying provinces as well as the fertile plains of Asia Minor, was the first of the enemy Powers to recover successfully from defeat, and in the subsequent Treaty of Lausanne (1923) gained all her demands except in Western Thrace. The story of Mustapha Kemal Pasha and the rapid conversion of Turkey into a modernised national state is probably the most extraordinary achievement of this immediate post-war period. It is a story to which justice cannot be done here, for it deserves a complete history of its own. In a sense Kemal Pasha ranks with Benes as a great constructive statesman, although his methods were Asiatic rather than European and succeeded in spite of rather than because of Allied designs. Perhaps Lenin affords a closer analogy to his career. Mustapha Kemal was convinced from the first that the Allies were not to be trusted, and he rejected the Sèvres Treaty which the Sultan had accepted. By 1923 he had overthrown the old regime, had been appointed President of the new Republic and was free to launch his far-reaching reforms. The Allies had then to face a changed situation, but this development belongs to a later stage of the period which we are examining. The immediate problem was the reconstitution of the Arab portion of the Ottoman Empire, and, as the Arabs had been active combatants on the side of the Allies, with the assistance of that elusive and mysterious Englishman—T. E. Lawrence—the Allies were anxious to recognise, within limits, Arab independence. The Turks raised no difficulties as to the severance of the Arab provinces. These provinces were Iraq (Mesopotamia),

Syria, Palestine, Hedjaz and Nejd—the central Arabian desert. After much controversy and without consulting the inhabitants—the practical obstacles against a plebiscite were too considerable—Syria was divided into four parts, Britain securing a mandate over Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan. France, in accordance with an agreement entered into with Britain as early as 1916, acquired the mandate of North Syria. Hedjaz was recognised as an independent kingdom, although, even here, the settlement proved unsatisfactory, since the Allies underestimated the strength of the Arab nationalist movement, led by Ibn Saud, who refused to admit the claims of the ruler of Hedjaz, the Sherif Hussein.

Lawrence was bitterly disappointed with the treatment his Arab friends had received, and in a letter to *The Times* (July 23, 1920) condemned the British mandatory administration of Iraq. The French rule in Syria was fiercely resented by the Arab population, while in Palestine the British policy was heavily compromised by an undertaking which Lord Balfour had given in 1917, in return for the valuable help which Dr Weizmann had afforded the Ministry of Munitions, that Palestine should become a national home for the scattered Jewish peoples. The consequent Jewish immigration to a land which the Arabs regarded as their own resulted in a series of troubles, and, however strongly one may be prepared to criticise the extreme Arab opposition, there can be no doubt that Wilson's Fifth Point — that every territorial settlement must be made in the interests of the population already settled there—was comparatively violated.

These troubles in the Middle East are a fair illustration of the conflicting principles which animated the Allies in their attempt to restore order to the world. On the one hand they were unquestionably sincere in their desire to apply the Wilsonian principles. Mr Gathorne-Hardy<sup>1</sup> is from this angle justified in declaring that "there has surely seldom or never been constructed a peace of a more idealistic character." The peace-settlement was undoubtedly a serious endeavour to apply a positive political theory and not merely to satisfy the aspirations of the victorious Powers. The mandatory scheme, which fell into three categories

<sup>1</sup> *A Short History of International Affairs.*

was, for example, an advance on any previous plan for the control of undeveloped territories: it placed the mandates under the obligation of rendering an annual account of their stewardship to the League of Nations: at least in theory, it recognised the rights of the subject peoples. But it was vitiated in practice by the fact that in nearly every instance the mandates had commercial and political interests at stake, in view of their imperial responsibilities, in the lands thus placed under their control. It was unfortunate that America, having rejected the League, refused to accept any mandates. Japan was content with the acquisition of the German islands in the Pacific. France and Britain, Italy having been excluded from a share, therefore became the chief administrators. The British mandate in Tanganyika (East Africa) completed her 'all-red' route from Cairo to the Cape. Her mandate in Palestine increased her control over the Suez Canal. Her mandate in Iraq gave her a valuable hold over the oil-wells. In fact, a mandatory system could hardly function satisfactorily within the framework of an imperialist order. Britain, although technically gaining no fresh territory of her own as the result of victory, enormously strengthened her imperial vantage through the mandates awarded her. It is true, however, that the British mandatory administration proved, on the whole, more successful than that of the French in Syria. In 1920 the disorders which broke out as a result of the Emir Feisal, Britain's faithful ally, foolishly accepting the crown of Syria and Palestine, gave the French an opportunity of establishing themselves in disputed territory and then of pursuing a nakedly imperialist policy. Mr Bonar Law had to assure a critical House of Commons that the French occupation of this territory would be no more than temporary. But no evacuation materialised.

The fundamental fault lay, not in the manner in which the mandatory scheme was administered, but in the fact that it was attempted within the existing imperialistic framework. Colonial rule may bring some benefits to the subjected races and may allow unimpeded access for the foreigner to the raw material available. But the result of parcelling up the world into separate imperial preserves has not only given each imperial Power an outlet for its own capital investment and a highly valuable source of

profit which the non-possessing nations cannot obtain, but has incited non-possessing nations to acquire colonial territory, if necessary by violence, for purposes of prestige. In an imperialistic world the influence of a nation is largely measured by the extent of its colonial property. An imperialist order divides the world into powerful and less powerful States, into the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.' If, as the mandatory principle theoretically presumed, virgin land is to be administered in wholly international interests for the equal good—that is to say—of all nations, as well as to enable the native races to be trained for eventual self-government, there must be no possessory imperial element in it, as there is in the case of a colony. A mandate held by a Power already owning colonies will be considerably affected by that Power's imperial policy. The mandates might have been distributed among the States without colonies, though this plan would hardly have been practicable for financial and military reasons. As the arrangement stood, the mandatory feature of the settlement was a compromise, and a compromise which, by retaining the mark of the imperial system, failed to eradicate one of the primary causes of war.

In this chapter we have been concerned exclusively with the pattern of the settlement which was designed at Versailles, and, though it would be premature at this stage to draw any detailed conclusions as to the causes which led ultimately to breakdown and disaster, we are able at once to detect certain fundamental flaws in the scheme. Three such flaws may here be mentioned. The first is that, whereas the League was intended to introduce an international democratic order, it was part of a design imposed undemocratically by the victorious Allies on their enemy. In spite of its immense potentialities for good, this new association of nations was born of a suspect parentage: it was a medium through which Allied diplomacy was from the first entirely dominant, it failed to provide that break with the old tradition which was implied in its ideals. Secondly, despite the attempt to erect an authority overriding the fatal independence of separate national sovereignties, it actually created an additional number of sovereignties, such as Finland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, mostly small States which, because of their com-

parative weakness, were to prove a ready prey for the acquisitive or defensive aspirations of their more powerful neighbours. Thirdly, whereas the settlement contemplated a degree of political unity between the nations it made no effort to amend the existing economic system, a system which of its very nature provoked competition and therefore disunity between the various national Governments. Here, indeed, we touch the core of the whole problem. Nothing less than an economic revolution was required if the League was to constitute a first step towards a regime of peace and security. But the statesmen of 1919 were not prepared, indeed they were determined to prevent so drastic a change. Economic nationalism was not unseated, it was accentuated. The League structure was built, accordingly, on economic foundations which were themselves in the process of dissolution. The bitter lesson that only a planned economic and political civilization could save the world was yet to be learned. And the events of the next two decades were to provide the moral.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE POST-WAR SETTLEMENT IN ACTION

#### *The Troubles in Hungary*

IN the chaos and devastation which followed in the wake of the official war Hungary was the most immediate responsibility with which the Allies were confronted. Count Tisza, the former Premier, had been murdered, and King Karl dethroned, while Michael Karolyi, an aristocratic 'progressive' pacifist, was in nominal command. The disarmed Hungarians awaited the Allied terms, and meanwhile through that terrible winter of 1918-19 refugees were pouring into Budapest—more than 700,000 of them—bringing with them dreadful stories of Rumanian plunder in Transylvania. Villages had been burnt, the Serbs were pillaging the Banat, Pressburg and Kassa had been looted by the Czechs.

By March 20, 1919, the Allies had fixed the new Hungarian frontiers, and the result was a violent reaction from pacifist ideology. Karolyi resigned and released from prison Bela Kun, a Communist Jew. By the end of March Bela Kun had seized power and had declared Hungary to be a Soviet Republic. This was precisely the kind of development which the Allies were resolved to suppress. The upheaval which accompanied it seemed to the statesmen of Versailles a materialization of their fear that Communist revolution might quickly spread across the face of Europe. In spite of the crude and violent features of the short-lived Bela Kun regime, it should be remembered that the Hungarian revolutionary programme represented a serious attempt to introduce far-reaching reforms and order. A system of universal education was devised, the land was nationalised, the Government guaranteed maintenance to all unemployed and promised full liberty to religious organizations and to racial minorities, on condition that no attempt was made to upset the new order.

But the Allies were in no mood to tolerate this threat to the established civilization. By the close of July they

had loosed the Rumanian army on Budapest to unseat the revolutionary Government. This foreign invasion equalled, if it did not exceed, any violence of which Bela Kun had been accused. The Rumanian soldiers destroyed both human beings and property, carrying all the transportable wealth available back to Bucharest. Admiral Horthy, who had commanded the Austrian fleet in the war, rode into the Hungarian capital and proclaimed a regency for the absent King. Fresh acts of violent terrorism were perpetrated. An anti-Jewish pogrom was launched and Communists were massacred. The cruelties inflicted by the white counter-revolution were more appalling than any activities of which Bela Kun was guilty. But Horthy, whatever his bona fides, could at least be regarded by the Allies as a bulwark against the danger of bolshevism. His authority was recognised, and Hungary at the earliest possible moment was admitted into the League. Twice in 1921 King Karl returned, but Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia quickly mobilised, so that he was forced to flee. Dr Benes put in a claim on behalf of Czechoslovakia for the expenses of his country's mobilization by way of indemnity. And, though this was not granted, the Hungarian Government was forced to bind itself to exclude the Hapsburgs for ever and to make no election to the monarchy without the consent of the Conference of Ambassadors.

Horthy, meanwhile, had re-established reactionary and feudal conditions. Universal suffrage and the secret ballot were abolished. Nearly half the land was held in big estates of over 1,400 acres. Three-quarters of the peasants were landless. The economic condition of Hungary had deteriorated as a result of the reduction of her territory. The fact that a third of the Magyar subjects had been handed over to foreign rule was an additional reason for her discontent, and the development to which this discontent might some day lead were responsible largely for the formation of the Little Entente in 1920 and 1921.

Hungary remained, although in theory a quasi-republic, anything but a democracy; she was now subject to a type of Government which was contrary to all that Woodrow Wilson would have desired. But, with the signing of the Versailles Treaty, Wilson, as we have seen, had already quitted the stage.

*Austrian Collapse*

It was the Austrian half of the old empire, however, which caused the Allies a deeper anxiety. Her industrial plant had drawn its coal from land which had now passed into the hands of Czechoslovakia and its oil from Galicia which was now Polish. The inevitable consequence was economic collapse, though, as has been previously stated, this disaster was due to no desire on the part of the Allies to inflict a vindictive punishment. Indeed, Englishmen have always discovered a curious affinity between themselves and the Austrian nation. Whereas, for twenty years or more, the German had been regarded as Britain's natural foe, the Austrian was welcomed as a good sportsman and his country associated with memories of pleasant holidays in the Tyrol and of the gay lights of Vienna. France, also, saw no danger in her neighbour, and the Austrian share in the 1914 crisis was easily forgiven. It was therefore not by design that during the winter of 1918-19 and in the subsequent months Austria's sufferings were so terrible. The *krone* sank to about an eighteen-thousandth part of its former value. Many people, faced with ruin, committed suicide. Communal meals had to be provided to avert widespread starvation. Only those lucky enough to obtain high wages could purchase fuel and clothing. A complete financial collapse was staved off in February 1922 only by advances made out of public funds by Britain, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia.

By October 1922 a scheme of reconstruction, proposed by the Financial Committee of the League, had been adopted to control and reform the Austrian finances. A new Bank of Issue was vested with the sole right of issuing notes, and the necessary legislation was passed by the Austrian Government in November. Two loans were floated in the spring of 1923, both of which were highly successful, and the second of which was oversubscribed in a few hours. In this mood of grateful dependence the Government of Vienna assented to the transfer to Hungary of the Burgenland, a strip of territory within twenty miles of the capital. Austria had protested against the plebiscite which had voted in favour of this transfer, on the ground that it had been conducted on an old register. This dispute, having been

settled, the prospects of the depleted country seemed to be temporarily brighter. Artificial respiration had restored the patient into a condition of convalescence.

### *Germany and Reparations*

It was Germany, however, which inevitably constituted the chief post-war problem. Revolution had broken out during the closing weeks of the war in Kiel, Hamburg and Bremen, and, two days before the Armistice was signed, in Berlin. It was a comparatively bloodless revolution in Berlin, only fifteen people being killed. Prince Max resigned and was succeeded by Ebert, the head of the Socialist Party. Ebert stood for a liberal democratic programme and was opposed by the monarchists and reactionary nationalists as well as by the revolutionary Socialists and Communists. The latter parties were led by Karl Liebknecht (Spartacus) and Rosa Luxembourg, and on January 5, 1919, civil war broke out in Berlin. The Government decided to call out the remnant of the imperial army. The revolt was crushed with great severity. Spartacus and Rosa Luxembourg were, as the official report politely describes the incident, "shot while trying to escape": actually, they were murdered by the police in a peculiarly brutal manner. The insurrection certainly aided the moderate parties at the elections which followed immediately after. A coalition was formed of the majority Socialists, Liberal Democrats, and Catholic Centre. This, one would have supposed, was just the type of German Government the Allies in their own interests should have supported. It represented neither the reactionary monarchist-military war-party nor the revolutionary Communists, whose influence in Europe the Allies so fervently dreaded: it was opposed by both these sections. Although the Berlin disturbances had been crushed the new Government was threatened with violent agitation from both extreme factions. There were strikes in Essen and the Ruhr. Bands of ex-soldiers, whom the armistice had thrown out into the world discontented and unemployed, roamed the country. An attempt by the Government to disband one of these corps led to a revolt from the Right, in March 1920, when General Baron von Lüttwitz occupied Berlin with 8,000

troops and proclaimed Dr Kapp president. Ebert had no troops available : the elements on which he had drawn to defeat the Spartacists were now arrayed against him. The Government was saved by a general strike of the workers. The machinery of Berlin was brought to a standstill and Kapp fled to Sweden. It was the workers who had rallied to the rescue of the Liberal republic.

• Meanwhile, the Government had drawn up at Weimar a constitution which became law in August 1919. The whole adult population, male and female, was given the vote for the Reichstag elections. The Reichsrat was formed largely on the model of the American Senate. The Government persisted in the task of establishing a democratic State in spite of economic and foreign political discouragement. Not only were starvation and poverty rife, but in May 1919 came the Allied peace-terms which caused consternation and despair in the country. Soon after the Kapp *putsch* had been quelled trouble broke out in the Ruhr among the workers led by the Communists. This area lay within the demilitarised zone, and the German Government therefore appealed to the Allies for permission to call in troops additional to those which had been allowed to remain there, but who were shortly, under the armistice-terms, due for evacuation. The British Government was inclined to grant this request, but the French were adamant. The German Government, faced with a situation which was becoming hourly more critical, took matters into its own hands. The French, without consulting the British, thereupon occupied Frankfurt and Darmstadt.

The consequence of this action was seen at the forthcoming elections. Both the extreme Right and Left were strengthened and the Government accordingly weakened. The effect of the French policy was inevitably to associate the Weimar Republic in the German mind with a period not only of privation and financial ruin but of ignominious humiliation. In the British occupied zone the relations of the army and civilian population were just and tolerant. In the French zone insult was heaped on insult. The Germans suffer from an acute colour-prejudice ; the French therefore deliberately placed black sentries in the streets. German citizens used to express their silent protest by crossing the road where the sentry was posted and re-crossing

when they had passed him. The coal shortage had caused a heavy reduction in all train-services, so that the railway-compartments were packed to suffocation: each train had three rear-carriages, *reservées pour les militaires*, the compartments of which were locked and unoccupied, except perhaps by one or two French officers. During the winters of the occupation the population shivered over empty grates or burned small supplies of wood which they had collected: in the precincts of each occupied town large stacks of coal for army use were guarded zealously by the French troops.

The only excuse for this behaviour offered by the French and by those who sympathise with the French standpoint is that the Weimar Republic was not to be trusted, and that every German was and is, in fact, determined to plunge the world at the first opportunity into war, so as to achieve world-domination. This argument, which was vigorously advocated by Lord Vansittart at a later date, rests on the assumption that the Weimar Republic was just as warlike in its ambitions as were the Nazis who eventually overthrew it. It is difficult to see how this claim can be substantiated. The German Government, it is true, had relied on the militarist forces to quell the troubles in Berlin and the provinces, but this action, it can hardly be disputed, was necessitated by the Allied terms, which refused to allow an adequate force to cope with such a situation. Moreover, it must be remembered that the German Government had called on the reactionary army elements only in order to prevent what the Allies most desired to prevent—a revolution of the Left. The elements which were likely to prove a future war-danger were not at this period in the ascendancy. The boys and girls who camped in the woods together and climbed the mountains personified a complete reaction from the blood-and-glory tradition of the previous generation. The German Youth Movement may be appraised or criticised for its idealism or its paganism: but the outlook which it expressed was the very reverse of war-mindedness. Nor can the attitude of that majority of middle-aged citizens, who were supporting a Government labouring under great provocation to satisfy the Allied demands, be associated with military romanticism. These ordinary middle-class men and women had been battered and disillusioned by the war, and above all else they desired peace.

It is difficult, indeed, to account for the bitter hostility displayed towards the Weimar Republic by the German Conservatives, and subsequently by the Nazis, if its purpose was to prepare for another war. In any event, since the Republican Government was more favourable to Allied interests than any other conceivable German administration it would surely have been wiser to strengthen its authority than to play into the hands of its enemies.

The Allies, however, were determined to render Germany impotent, and to this end they relied largely on reducing her to a condition of poverty by imposing on her a heavy financial burden. It had been agreed at the armistice that Germany should pay for the civilian damage which she had caused, and this was estimated by the British Treasury at about £2,000,000,000. There seems to have been some confusion, however, in the minds of Allied statesmen as to whether Germany was being charged specifically for these costs, or for as much of the general cost of the war as she could afford to pay. The presence of the 'War Guilt' clause in the 'reparation' section of the Treaty—a clause which, in view of the extreme resentment it caused in Germany, is of some historical importance—was intended to imply that although only a certain kind of reparation was being charged (plus cost of pensions and separation allowances which were subsequently added to the bill), Germany was morally liable for the entire war-cost. During 1920 the Reparation Commission was engaged in controversial and uncertain deliberations as to whether Germany was paying in cash or in kind the amount already agreed. The Supreme Council of the Allies, which was independently attempting to fix the total sum and how that sum was to be paid, was able to report more decisive results. In July 1920 German representatives were summoned to a conference at Spa. Other conferences at Boulogne, Brussels and London considered the Allied and the German counter-proposals. An ultimatum was issued to Germany on March 3, 1921, owing to an extremely undiplomatic and somewhat disingenuous effort on her part to force a modification of the Allied terms. Düsseldorf and two other towns were occupied on March 8th in retaliation.

On May 5, 1921, the Allied Governments fixed the total sum to be paid at what in English money amounted to

£6,600,000,000, a sum at least three times greater than the total which most economists, including British Treasury experts, had reckoned that Germany could pay.<sup>1</sup> By the end of that month Germany was due to have paid no less than £1,000,000,000. Germany appealed unsuccessfully to the League of Nations and to the United States. The Government resigned, but Walther Rathenau, the head of the big German electrical combine, advised the new Government to accept the terms. On August 31, 1921, Germany agreed and paid the first instalment of £50,000,000.

It was already evident, however, that a financial crash in Germany was imminent. The payment of these first milliard marks had only been carried out with the help of a loan from a number of London firms. The German authorities then resorted to a reckless policy of inflation, and, consequently, the exchange value of the mark began to fall in August 1921. By March 1922 670 marks were equal to a dollar: in August 1922 a dollar was worth 4,500 marks. By August of the following year the mark had fallen to an astronomical figure. The German Government asked for a three-year moratorium in order to put its house in order. Lloyd George was in favour of this proposal, but Poincaré declared that this depreciation was no more than a German conspiracy to wriggle out of her obligations.

Briand and Lloyd George had agreed in London to a comprehensive plan to control Germany's finances in return for a limitation of the reparation claims for a year, and this scheme was being favourably considered at the Cannes Conference, when suddenly Briand was recalled by President Poincaré, on the ground that he was acting too generously towards the enemy. Although the situation was temporarily relieved by a conditional postponement of two monthly payments, agreed to by the Reparation Commission, it was obvious that a crisis was at hand. Poincaré proposed at the London Conference on December 9, 1922, that there should be no moratorium unless certain highly crippling 'productive guarantees' were agreed to. Mr Bonar Law strongly protested against the French scheme. On December 26th the Reparation Commission, by a casting

<sup>1</sup> Mr R. H. Brand, speaking to the Royal Institute of International Affairs on February 26, 1929, said that he originally estimated Germany's capacity at £2,000 million to £3,000 million, but that that sum "was much higher than I should put it now."



vote of the French representative as chairman—thus giving two votes to the French representation and out-voting the British—declared that Germany had defaulted. The default, which was technical and trifling, was due to difficulties in paying the contractors, owing to the fall of the mark and so of delivering to date the timber required by the German Government to pass over to France. Sir John Bradbury, the British representative, denounced the French claim as a “trumpery accusation” which “was only before the Commission at the moment as a preparation for an offensive in other fields.” This ‘offensive’ was carried out immediately. On January 11, 1923, the French army marched into the Ruhr basin, from which Germany obtained 85 per cent. of her coal, 80 per cent. of her pig-iron and steel production, and 70 per cent. of the goods and mineral traffic carried by her railways. All German officials in the district were replaced by French and Belgians. The German Government retaliated by a policy of passive resistance: it prescribed severe penalties on any German citizen who attempted to assist the French plans. The invaders were therefore compelled to work the railways and mines with their own soldiers, who were naturally unfamiliar with local conditions.

Faced with this German boycott the French pursued an even more drastic policy. They attempted to foment a Separatist movement, endeavouring to represent it as the outcome of a spontaneous desire on the part of the local inhabitants to form a Rhineland republic. There is evidence to show that the French actually distributed arms among such elements of the civilian population as could be incited to revolt, and when the German police attempted to quell the disorders they were disarmed. The revolt assumed more serious proportions in the Bavarian Palatinate. On October 24, 1923, the Palatinate was recognised by General de Metz as an autonomous State, and all the existing Bavarian officials were deprived of their executive powers. The Separatist minority, thus encouraged, seized the public buildings of every town in the Palatinate and deported 19,000 officials. But the movement was found to be so entirely antagonistic to majority German opinion that it had evaporated by February 1924. The casualty list resulting from this escapade amounted to 300 dead and

2,000 injured. The financial consequences were more sensational. By the autumn of 1923 the crisis in Germany had reached its zenith. Stresemann, who had become Chancellor, still accepted the Rathenau policy of reparations-fulfilment and called on Dr Schacht, the head of the Reichsbank, to take drastic measures to avoid total bankruptcy. The financial chaos had become indescribable. Those dependent on unearned incomes were completely ruined. A few persons profited, as, for instance, the farmers who were suddenly enabled to redeem their mortgages with millions of worthless marks. The workers would rush off to spend their wages the moment they were paid, as within an hour or two prices would rise to six times their former rate. Dr Schacht took a decisive step. A new renten mark, secured on the land and buildings of Germany, was issued, representing no less than one billion of the old marks. No economic surgical operation had ever been attempted in human history on such a stupendous scale. The rentier class were ruined more completely than the most violent Communist revolutionist could ever have contemplated.

There are two general considerations which deserve our attention at this stage. The first concerns the fundamental difficulty underlying the Allied scheme of reparations, a difficulty which apparently was insufficiently appreciated at the time. There are only three methods by which a conquered enemy can be made to pay: by gold, by services, or by commodities. Gold-payment is obviously impracticable where the liability is as immense as that with which Germany was saddled. Germany had not sufficient gold, and she could only obtain it by borrowing—in which case her real liability would remain—or by increasing her own export trading and thus seriously competing with her creditors. Payment by services had been rendered less practicable by the confiscation of a large part of the German mercantile fleet, and, in any case, this method was bound, if carried out on a sufficient scale, to injure the employment-prospects of the creditor nations. When, for instance, Loucheur, the French Minister of Reconstruction, agreed to Rathenau's proposal that German labour should restore the French devastated areas at German expense, the French Cabinet at once turned down the scheme on the ground that this task had already been promised to French contractors who would

employ French workmen. Payment by commodities would have been regarded as 'dumping,' and must similarly have damaged the economic interests of the competing nations.

This conclusion is, of course, an over-simplification of the economic problem, but it is valid as illustrating the general principle that the more a nation is compelled to pay—whatever the form of payment—the more it becomes impoverished and therefore unable to buy the exports of its creditors. The economic policy which the Allies imposed on Germany was bound, in the last resort, to react unfavourably upon themselves. It is worth noticing, indeed, that the French adventure in the Ruhr resulted in the franc falling to nearly a quarter of its previous value.

The other comment which should be made is that the events recorded in this section unmistakably exposed the radical difference on the German issue between the British and the French standpoint. Britain relied on foreign trade, and it was therefore to her interests not to see Germany reduced to a condition of permanent poverty: such a course meant ultimately that Britain would lose a profitable market. France, however, was largely self-supporting, and this consideration therefore affected her much less directly. Moreover, her fear of Germany was increased and the guarantees which she accordingly demanded against any further invasion undermined from the outset, by the action of the United States. Wilson had been prepared to promise with Great Britain a defence of the French frontier against aggression, but when America refused to undertake this responsibility Britain decided that she could not honour the pledge single-handed. The French Government had therefore to discover a substitute for this lost security and drew closer both to Belgium and to Poland who were concerned with the same type of problem. On the Reparation Commission the Belgian and French views, after a disagreement between them over Luxemburg had been settled, became almost identical. The absence of any American representative on that body caused Britain repeatedly to be out-voted. French fears dominated both reparations and political policy, and the divergence between French and British views rapidly widened.

The next period proved to be a happier one. Poincaré was defeated at the 1924 elections and Herriot took his

place. Briand in France, Stresemann in Germany, and Ramsay MacDonald in Britain did much to improve the situation, though, in Germany, the acids of resentment had already poisoned the German mind. But at the moment the horizon was brighter. Even the reparations question entered a more reasonable phase. Mr Baldwin, who had become premier in May 1923, appealed to America to co-operate in an investigation of Germany's financial capacities. The result was the appointment of a commission of business men in place of the politicians and diplomats, presided over by the Chicago banker, General Charles G. Dawes. The Dawes Plan was accepted by the Reich Government in April 1924. Germany was to pay amounts rising in five years from 1,000 million gold marks to 2,500 (£125,000,000). This amount was to be paid partly through the German budget and partly from railway bonds and industrial debentures. A loan of 800 million gold marks was floated, the largest portion of which was raised in America. These loans were subsequently increased, until by the end of 1928 they had reached the figure of 18,000 million gold marks.

Before we ring down the curtain on this unhappy story it is worth noting that the French exploit in the Ruhr resulted in some unsettlement outside the occupied territory. On November 8, 1923, a revolt broke out in Bavaria, which, however, was quickly crushed. The leader was General Ludendorff, but it is the presence of his lieutenant which is significant. His name was Adolf Hitler.

#### *Unrest in Eastern Europe and Asia Minor*

As we pursue our survey of Europe in this immediate post-war phase we can detect two main trends of thought which were affecting the course of international affairs. The first and by far the more important of these was the problem of security. The second, which partly but not wholly arose from the sense of the need for security, was the desire of certain of the lesser States to exploit those opportunities for aggrandisement which their newly established independence in some cases had bestowed on them.

The first of these problems can more conveniently be

discussed when we come to study the phase of European history which may be said to have commenced in 1924. The second development is illustrated more immediately by the action of Poland. As we have seen, the relations of France and Poland had grown more intimate, since both countries were geographically adjacent to Germany, Poland having to reckon, in addition, with the proximity of her powerful Russian neighbour. Polish policy is closely associated with the name of Joseph Pilsudski who had become Chief of State in 1918 and had sent Paderewski, the famous pianist, to represent his country at Versailles. The Poles were not actuated at this time merely by considerations as to their own safety : they were intoxicated by their patriotism, and Pilsudski, an adventurous soldier who had been banished to Siberia by the Czar and had subsequently fought for Germany, was regarded by his people as a national hero. Dissatisfied with the terms which Paderewski had obtained at Versailles—although the provinces of Posen, West Prussia and Galicia were included within the new Poland—Pilsudski led a Polish army into the Russian Ukraine and occupied Kiev in April 1920. The Russians counter-attacked and advanced to within six miles of Warsaw. Poland's existence was thus in peril, but the French came to their rescue, sending General Weygand to take command. The Soviet Army was forced to retreat. A collision now occurred near Suwalki between Polish and Lithuanian troops, and, after a Polish appeal to the League, an armistice was signed on October 7, 1920, which left Vilna within the Lithuanian frontiers. The Poles, however, by means of a technically 'unofficial' army, led by General Zeligowski, occupied Vilna, and the League subsequently (in March, 1923) recognised the Polish claim. Poland had also gained by her victory over Russia a large portion of the Ukraine. Her offensive against the Ruthenians and her consequent acquisition of Galicia were undisguised acts of aggression. But the aggression paid. Poland had become a more extensive country than had ever been intended at Versailles. Her territory included the German population of Posen and seven million White Russians and Ukrainians, the latter people being placed under severe police regulations, and the number of their schools reduced from 2,420 to 745 (in 1928). The French meanwhile were materially assisting

Poland. Marshal Foch was sent to Warsaw in 1923 to advise in reconstruction schemes, and the same year a French loan of 300,000,000 gold francs was raised, most of which was spent on the port of Gdynia, the Polish rival to the League-controlled Danzig. The contract for building was given to a French firm.

The Polish success in obtaining Vilna by force encouraged the Lithuanians to adopt the same tactics and apply them to the case of Memel. It had been intended by the League that this German town and territory should be given the same status as Danzig. But, to prevent this happening, the Lithuanians in January 1923 invaded Memel, and after some street fighting compelled the French garrison, who were in temporary charge under Allied commission, to surrender. The Allies were at this moment concerned with the threatened occupation of the Ruhr, and had no troops available to send for the reinforcement of their authority. Memel accordingly passed, with certain qualifications, into Lithuanian possession.

Rumania was another nationality whose gains were an uneasy legacy. Her Transylvanian territory had been taken from Hungary, the Dobrudja—which she had seized in 1913—was naturally Bulgarian, and her title to Bessarabia was disputed from the first by the Soviet Union. One of the most prominent features of this disturbed period was the network of regional alliances which had begun to stretch across Europe, a symptom of a want of faith on the part of the smaller nations in the degree of security which the League would be able to offer them, and a sign also that the post-war continent, far from developing in an international direction was in reality seething with a spirit of aggrieved and fear-ridden nationalism. Rumania entered into alliance with Greece and Poland, and, in addition, formed with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia the Little Entente, which was mainly intended as a defence against possible Hungarian developments. The Little Entente owed its existence to Benes' initiative but, owing to the Slavonic affinities of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, it was not designed to support Rumania against Russia, should Rumania become involved with the Soviet Union over her doubtful title to Bessarabia. Hence, Rumania had to look round for additional allies.

Of all the national entities which the Peace Treaty had created or cemented, the Czechoslovakian Republic was probably the most successful. Although composed of several racial elements, Czechs, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Germans, it attained a very workable unity and, with the help of the wealthy Silesian factories, a considerable degree of prosperity. Yugoslavia was less happy. Her two main constituents were the Serbs and the Croats, the former a race of Eastern peasants and the latter a people whose culture was the product of West European and Roman Catholic traditions. Her chief danger lay across the Adriatic, and she watched apprehensively the endeavours of Italy to satisfy the ambitions which Versailles had frustrated. In September 1919, the swashbuckling Italian poet, d'Annunzio, seized the port of Fiume from which he was not ejected till the beginning of 1921. Although an agreement was signed between Italy and Yugoslavia on October 23, 1922, the Mussolini dictatorship, which came into power shortly afterwards, introduced a more defiant element into Italian foreign policy. It will be convenient to postpone our examination of Fascism to a later chapter, as its significance became more fully apparent in the subsequent period of post-war disintegration and, indeed, was one of the chief contributory causes of that collapse. Chronologically, however, Mussolini's first adventures belong to the present context.

On August 27, 1923, four Italians—including a general and one Albanian—were murdered on Greek soil. In spite of a submissive reply on the part of Greece to the Italian ultimatum, an Italian naval squadron was sent to Corfu without any consultation with or authorization from the League, and bombarded the island. Greece appealed to the League, but, concurrently and independently, the Conference of Ambassadors sent a note to Greece demanding an inquiry as to the outrage. Mussolini replied to the League by threatening to occupy Corfu indefinitely, if the League dared to interfere. Eventually a settlement was reached by which Greece was ordered to deposit a sum of fifty million lire to await the decision of the Court of International Justice. The Ambassadors' Conference then insisted that this sum should be paid at once to Italy, a peremptory action which in itself constituted a direct

challenge on the part of the old diplomacy to the new system for which the League was supposed to stand. The evacuation of Corfu was, in effect, accomplished only by compelling Greece to pay danegeld to the aggressor.

The League could claim a slightly more satisfactory exercise of its authority over trouble which arose between Greece and Bulgaria, as a result of the presence of a Bulgarian minority in Macedonia. A number of Bulgarian prisoners, who had been arrested by the Greeks on a charge of sedition, were massacred by their escort, the Greek Government being subsequently exonerated from any official responsibility for the crime. In October 1925 a Greek commandant was shot while attempting to mediate, under cover of a flag of truce, during the course of frontier skirmishes. The Greeks then commenced to invade Bulgaria in earnest, but the League was successful in preserving peace. Greece was ordered to pay compensation to the amount of £45,000, and, although the settlement must be put to the credit-balance of League achievements, it is doubtful whether the old concert of Europe could not with equal facility have suppressed hostilities between two minor States.

The conflicting interests of Italy and Yugoslavia were also evident in regard to Albania, a Moslem sphere in the Balkans whose independence had been authorised in 1912. In 1921 Britain, France and Japan officially committed themselves to a recognition of the claims of Italian influence in that territory, and thereby helped to increase the fears of encirclement which Yugoslavia harboured.

Reference has already been made to Mustapha Kemal and the rapid emergence of Turkish nationalism. Attempts to arrive at the abortive Sèvres Treaty were heavily complicated by the Italian and the Greek claims to the Smyrna territory from which Turkey was to be ejected. The Italians declared that this territory had been promised them under the secret Treaty of London, and began a military advance from Adalia. In order to forestall them a Greek force was landed at Smyrna in May 1919, under cover of Allied warships. The Greeks and Turks were hereditary enemies, and it was unfortunate that a country inhabited by many Turks should be entrusted to Greek control. There were complaints and counter-complaints



from Turks and Greeks respectively as to atrocities. By January 1920 the Kemalist agitation had spread to Constantinople, and in the newly formed Turkish 'Chamber of Deputies' a majority adopted the Nationalist programme. The Allies therefore occupied Constantinople, and a number of Turkish Nationalists were arrested and interned in Malta, the legality of the latter proceeding, so far as the terms of the armistice were concerned, being highly doubtful. The Sèvres Treaty was passed in May, and Turkey learnt that she was not only to lose Arabia, Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, Armenia and Kurdistan, but that Smyrna was to be placed for five years under Greek administration. The Sultan accepted the Treaty, and thereupon Mustapha Kemal commenced his offensive. His forces attacked British positions in the Ismid Peninsula and were repulsed. But the dangers of the situation were becoming evident. France and Britain agreed to an offer by Venizelos, the pro-Ally Greek statesman, that a Greek force should be sent to deal with the Turkish insurrection, and for a time the Greek expedition was successful. Then an unfortunate incident occurred which had considerable political results. Alexander, the young Greek King, was bitten by a monkey and died from blood-poisoning. A general election in Greece followed, Venizelos was defeated, the ex-King Constantine, who had been a friend of the Central Powers in the war, returned, and Allied sympathy with Greece waned. The Italians withdrew from Asia Minor in April 1921, and, after a further advance the Greek army was heavily defeated by Mustapha Kemal at the battle of the Sakaria River in September. More serious still, in October, M. Franklin-Bouillon negotiated a separate peace with the new Kemal Government, a settlement by which important strategic positions were given to Turkey. Lord Curzon made a vigorous protest against the French action, and Mr Winston Churchill declared that France "was now ardently backing and rearming the Turks."

\* The position had become critical, not only for the Greeks but for Britain, who was thus left in the lurch as the sole and unsupported representative of Allied authority. The Greeks were now in full retreat, Kemal entered Smyrna, and the French and Italians withdrew their forces. Mr Lloyd George issued a desperate appeal to the Dominions

to come to the help of the Greeks and the British, a step which ultimately contributed to his own political downfall: public, or certainly Conservative, sentiment in England was strongly against being involved in a new war. Yet, had the Turks persisted, Britain was already so committed that her withdrawal would have implied a moral defeat of Allied authority which might have precipitated the gravest consequences.

Fortunately, Mustapha Kemal had no imperialistic designs. Having recovered Smyrna he was content, though by the Lausanne Treaty of July 24, 1923, he also recovered Eastern Thrace, with Adrianople and Karagach. Of all the defeated States Turkey had won for herself by far the most favourable terms. Mustapha Kemal now became the first President of the Turkish Republic, and by a series of drastic reforms he shook off all the eastern and Islamic ties which bound Turkey to an obscurantist and reactionary past. He built State schools throughout the Republic, he substituted the Latin alphabet for the Arab script, he emancipated women and abolished the *purdah*, he forbade the use of the *fez*, and Mohammedanism ceased to be the State religion. His action in renouncing the Caliphate—the papacy of the Mohammedan Church—caused for a time serious repercussions throughout the world of Islam.

Mustapha Kemal ruled as a dictator in what was soon to become the approved totalitarian style, and within a few years he had established a modernised, secularised State. When we remember that Turkey had been, up to the war, one of the most backward and corrupt countries in the world, Kemal's achievement is seen to be indeed remarkable. It is worth recording that later—in 1930—he tried an experiment which is not without its peculiar humour. He deliberately allowed and encouraged an opposition-party to be formed against him, much to the dismay of his supporters. The opposition became an organ of reaction. The Kurds armed in the east, a new Mahdi appeared in Smyrna. Then Mustapha Kemal struck. He executed the Mahdi and twenty-eight of his supporters. The rebellion was crushed. To the immense relief of his subjects Kemal abandoned liberal parliamentary methods and reassumed the role of the complete autocrat.

*Ireland*

The growth of nationalism, which the doctrine of self-determination had nurtured, manifested itself, however, much nearer home. The Irish had for many years actively agitated for self-government. Racially and by religious tradition Anglo-Saxondom is alien to them. The Irish considered that they had been cheated of the measure of self-government which had been assured them, prior to the outbreak of the war, under the Home Rule Act. Now, at a time when Britain with the other Powers was busy in securing the independence of racial groups throughout Europe, Irish claims surely merited satisfaction. The British insistence that Ireland should remain an integral part of the United Kingdom was clearly inconsistent with the policy which she professed as a member of the League.

Mr Lloyd George, who had been a prominent supporter of Home Rule before the war, was in a unique position in 1919. His influence was unchallenged. Even the Conservatives who had detested his earlier radicalism now regarded him as the hero of victory. Had he been determined to carry out an advanced radical programme he would probably, in 1919, have carried the majority of the nation with him and English political history might have been written very differently. But war, the fruits of victory, and the continual opposition which he encountered in the counsels of Versailles, had left their mark on him. In the case of Ireland he gravely miscalculated the nature of the Sinn Fein disorders which had broken out partly as the result of the attempt to apply conscription to Ireland in 1918. He imagined that, as in the rising of 1916, he was dealing with a small band of determined desperadoes. He was wrong: this time the whole Catholic population was behind the movement.

By 1919 the Irish had set up their own parliament—the Dail—proclaimed an Irish Republic, and elected Eamon de Valera as President. An illegal Government with its own ministers and Law Courts was established. The British Government attempted to meet this situation by creating under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, separate parliaments for Ulster and for the rest of Ireland. The Irish Republicans, however, ignored this belated com-

promise and instituted a reign of terror. They attacked the Royal Constabulary, formed an army and resorted to a form of guerilla warfare. On Sunday, November 21, 1920, a particularly brutal outrage was committed by the insurgents in Dublin. Very unwisely, in view of the conditions of acute disturbance, married British officers had been allowed to live outside the walls of the barracks, in unprotected hotels and private houses. These victims had been marked down, and early on that morning pickets of armed men entered their apartments and shot fourteen of these officers in the presence of their wives. That same afternoon a terrible retaliation was perpetrated. A large crowd had collected in Croke Park to watch a football match. Suddenly a detachment of British soldiers turned their machine-guns on the unarmed civilians. Fourteen people were killed and over sixty wounded. General Macready's account was that the police were first fired upon by the crowd, but this statement is disputed. It is true that disciplinary military action was taken against those responsible for this outrage, and that the Government had to face indignant criticism in the House of Commons: but the harm had been done. The Irish had already launched an offensive campaign conducted mainly in the form of ambushes and murderous attacks on members of the Irish constabulary. In July 1920 the British had reinforced the regular troops with a body of auxiliary armed police, known as the 'Black and Tans.' The tactic of the 'Black and Tans' was to meet terrorism by terrorism. Both sides were guilty of barbarous conduct. Armoured cars paraded the streets of Dublin shooting indiscriminately, and valuable property throughout the countryside was burnt to the ground. The British forces found themselves surrounded by a bitterly hostile population. Throughout 1921 this murderous struggle continued, a melancholy commentary, indeed, on the administration of a Power which was foremost in insisting on the rights of small nations, but which did not apparently appreciate that the principles of the League might well be applied within its own empire.

By the end of 1921 Lloyd George had begun to appreciate that Ireland could not be subdued without a vast military campaign, and that, even then, no victory would bring real peace. Moreover, the sympathies of other Powers, and

particularly those of America, were increasingly against Britain. Suddenly Lloyd George decided to execute a complete *volte-face*. De Valera was invited to London to discuss the possibility of negotiations, and in October a delegation, led by Arthur Griffiths and Michael Collins, met British representatives to discuss the terms of settlement. Throughout these deliberations Lloyd George revealed himself to be a master of stage-craft. Lloyd George played the claims of Ulster with such effect that the Irish plenipotentiaries found that a pistol had virtually been placed at their heads. The proceedings of that delegation make a highly dramatic story.<sup>1</sup> If these negotiations broke down the murderous war would be resumed, and one of the delegates, who had escaped arrest hitherto because his features were unfamiliar to the police, knew that he would be immune no longer—since he had been repeatedly photographed by press representatives in London. The final and critical stage was reached in a manner which left the Irish representatives no time to consult de Valera—apparently, in some extraordinary manner they had forgotten the existence of the telephone—and eventually they accepted the British offer. The terms involved the payment of £5,000,000 a year as annuity for Irish land hitherto held by English owners, an oath of allegiance by all ministers to the King, and the acceptance of the King's nominee as Governor-General. On the other hand, Ireland gained full dominion status, only the north-eastern Ulster counties being retained under British rule.

Next morning de Valera learned the news to his consternation and disgust. He disowned the agreement, for, although he was himself not purely Irish by descent, he represented the Irish mind, and the Irish mind is willing to fight to the death for sheer abstract principles. Freedom in practice was worthless, in de Valera's view, so long as Ireland was to remain within the hated British Commonwealth and was to take an oath of allegiance to the British monarch. A new civil war broke out, but this time no Englishmen were involved: the struggle was between de Valera's Republicans and the new Government, formed under William Cosgrave, which had accepted the Treaty. Michael Collins was killed in the fighting. The Republicans

<sup>1</sup> This story is well told in Frank Pakenham's *Peace by Ordeal*.

refused to enter the Dail until 1927. In February 1932 de Valera's party had defeated Cosgrave and de Valera became President of the Executive Council.

The nationalism which Eire has evolved bears little resemblance to the fascist model. It is a Catholic nationalism and a new type of Catholic State, since there has been no intolerance shown to minority religions. In some respects, such as in its censorship of plays and imported books, it has disclosed distinctly puritanic features. Celtic romanticism has played a large part in its policy, strenuous efforts, for instance, being made to revive the ancient Irish language, a language which had become almost unspoken except in the remote villages of Connaught.

But, whatever views we may have as to the progressive or reactionary character of Irish nationalism, there can be little doubt that events had proved not only the moral obligation but the practical wisdom of granting freedom to a race which demands freedom. Indeed, if by the end of 1921 Britain was ready to grant dominion status to Ireland, the student of history may be tempted to ask why she did not avoid the bloodshed by offering these terms at the outset. The answer may be given that, faced with deliberate rebellion, Britain was compelled to employ coercive measures, which is only another way of saying that British prestige was at stake and had at all costs to be defended. National prestige is unfortunately a cause for which most Governments, including that of Britain, have been willing to sacrifice thousands of lives. But, in this instance, the excuse hardly applies, since at the time that Lloyd George decided to enter into negotiation, the rebellion was far from crushed and British prestige had in no sense been vindicated. The fact that Britain was ready to swallow her pride and offer Ireland almost all that she demanded is indeed to her credit. The pity is that this bold step was undertaken so late in the day.

### *Egypt and Britain*

Ireland was not the only nationalist problem with which Great Britain was forced to concern herself. The Egyptians were one of the many peoples who had been impressed by President Wilson's principle of self-determination and who

believed that the Allies were committed to its application not only in Europe but in their own domestic spheres of influence. Egypt's relations with Britain were of a curious nature. She had been nominally under the sovereignty of the Sultan of Turkey, but in 1882 Britain's imperial interests led to an occupation by British troops, and though an evacuation was promised, the British army remained in occupation. Soon after the outbreak of the war (December 1914) Britain proclaimed a protectorate over Egypt, and, as there were no signs at the armistice that this protectorate was likely to be terminated, a nationalist revolt broke out in March 1919. Zaghlul, the leader of this movement, was deported and Lord Milner was sent out on a mission to report fully on the position. The mission proposed that a treaty should be concluded with Egypt, recognising her independence subject to certain safeguards. The time passed, but there were no signs that any such treaty was contemplated. On the contrary, the continued presence of British troops and the usual social and political bias of a governing over a subject race, particularly under the rigorous rule of Sir George Lloyd, were a continual source of irritation to Egyptian nationalist aspirations. For all practical purposes Egypt was in the same position as any of the native states of India. Lord Allenby's appointment in place of Lloyd introduced a less coercive policy, but in 1921 Allenby reported that in his view the continuance of the protectorate would involve a serious risk of revolution. Britain acted with greater promptitude than in the case of Eire, though, once again, only when internal agitation had forced her hand and not of her own initiative. In February 1922 the protectorate was abolished, and the independent sovereignty of Egypt was recognised. But imperialist considerations heavily qualified the reality of this independence. The Egyptians were to consent to the presence of a British garrison in their capital and to share with Britain the control of the Sudan. Britain declared that she must continue to safeguard Egypt against foreign aggression and must protect her own communications through the Suez Canal. The Egyptians were dissatisfied. In November 1924, Sir Lee Stack, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army and Governor-General of the Sudan, was murdered. Britain sent an ultimatum to the Egyptian Government and exacted

a fine of £500,000. Zaghlul, who had returned from exile to resume office, resigned, and a new Government was substituted. The Egyptian Parliament appealed to the League of Nations, but, significantly enough, it was decided that Egypt, although nominally a sovereign State, was sufficiently within the British sphere of influence to constitute this a domestic and not an international issue. It was not until August 26, 1936, that a treaty was signed between the two countries, under which British forces were given the right to remain in the neighbourhood of Alexandria for eight years, with adequate freedom of movement for training and full facilities for the Royal Air Force.

In Britain itself conditions after the armistice were largely affected by the economic situation. Expectation that pre-war prosperity would be resumed was strengthened by an immediate post-war boom. But this was an illusory improvement, for the economic position had been permanently affected by the war. Foreign countries had less need of British manufactures: they were themselves becoming industrialised. Japan and India now possessed their own cotton-mills. France was obtaining two million tons of coal from Germany—by way of reparations—and was therefore able to supply cheap coal to Italy, Scandinavia and Holland—all former customers of Britain. The German ships which had been confiscated were in several instances transformed into British luxury liners (the *Majestic* and *Berengaria* are examples), but this meant a corresponding loss of contract for British shipyards. Two-thirds of the men formerly employed in the ship-building industry were out of work. Meanwhile, many British overseas investments had been lost. The Soviet Union had repudiated the war-debt to Britain incurred by the Czarist Government. New York had usurped the place of London as the banking centre of the world.

Lloyd George accordingly found himself faced by July 1921 with over two million unemployed. The owners of the key industries were pressing for reduction of wages, and the employees were in a more revolutionary mood than at any other stage in the period between the two wars. To avert revolution and preserve the existing property-system the Government introduced the dole, thereby acknowledging the duty of the State to compensate workers



for whom no work could be found. By 1922, however, the Conservatives had grown restive under the Lloyd George Coalition, and an election was forced, resulting in a large Tory majority. The main policy of the Conservatives, under Mr Bonar Law, was to restore London's position in the banking-world. For this purpose Mr Baldwin was sent to America to negotiate the terms for the repayment of the huge debt of some £1,000 million owed by Britain to the United States. Mr Baldwin assented to a method of payment by instalments, 3 per cent. in the first ten years, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in the following fifty-two years. By April 1925 a further step towards restoring British financial status was taken by returning to the gold standard.

Mr Baldwin became Prime Minister a few months before the death of Mr Bonar Law, and decided that it was further necessary in the interests of economic recovery that tariffs should be imposed to a far larger extent than hitherto on British imports. Mr Baldwin considered that he must obtain the people's mandate for this final abandonment of free trade principles, and, against the advice of many of his supporters, he went to the country in 1923. The result was that while the Conservatives retained 258 seats, the Liberals and Labour Party won 159 and 191 respectively, so that there was no clear majority for any one party. Mr Asquith, the Liberal leader, decided to put Labour in office, and Ramsay MacDonald agreed to form a ministry on these conditions. To most middle-class Englishmen the advent of a professedly Socialist Government seemed to denote that the dreaded revolution had come at last. But their fears were soon proved to be unfounded. Not only was the Labour Government dependent on the Trades Union Congress, whose aim was virtually to preserve the capitalist system so as to obtain higher wages for the workers, but within the House of Commons it was wholly dependent on the Liberal vote. Labour did little more than to introduce certain measures of social reform, and, chiefly through Ramsay MacDonald's ability as Foreign Minister, to contribute to an improvement of conditions in international affairs.

Thus, the post-war world was launched on its way. But it was no new world. The attempt of Britain to regain her financial domination, the policy of France—now the

strongest military Power—towards her defeated enemy, the eagerness of the new and former sovereignties to safeguard their independence and, in some cases, to extend their spheres of influence, these were conceptions of the old, competitive, imperialist order, not of any new internationalist epoch. As was emphasised at the close of the last chapter, the League was able to serve as a means of cultivating closer relationships between the separate States, but it was not administered in such a way as to achieve a more ambitious transformation. The traditional principles of world-government remained intact. Moreover, this post-war world was based on precarious financial foundations. Germany, Austria and several of the other national entities, were maintaining their existence only by means of borrowed money. War-debts hung heavily round the necks of all the former belligerents, though it was not until 1929 that the full consequences of this indebtedness were to become apparent. For the moment the skies seemed to be clearing, the next act in the world-drama being the story of the promise of more stable conditions and, in general, of a national and constructive rather than a vindictive policy towards the nations which had been hardest hit by the four bitter years of war-conflict. Yet this amelioration, this increasingly co-operative temper on the part of the governing Powers, was to offer no more than a temporary breathing-space, a brief vision of security before the war clouds again gathered. It was still the old world, slightly adjusted and improved, and within the framework of that world no lasting peace could be established.

## THE SEARCH FOR SECURITY

*The Locarno and Kellogg Pacts*

THE period on which we are now entering can be more conveniently surveyed if we recognise the existence of three fundamental problems which remained unsolved and which accordingly helped to bring about the collapse of the post-war settlement. These may be classified as the problem of security and disarmament, the economic problem, and the problem of democracy. They are closely interrelated, but for our purposes lend themselves in some degree to independent consideration.

France was the country perhaps most directly concerned with the security issue. She had suffered twice in recent history from German invasion, and the American and British refusals to guarantee her frontiers left her (until Locarno) insufficiently protected from a neighbour who, though disarmed, was so numerically powerful as to constitute a perpetual potential menace. France must therefore discover a means of security, and the question first to be decided was whether the League was capable of providing that security. The logical French mind fastened on the gap left by the Covenant, whereby war was still regarded as legitimate if the machinery provided by Article XV broke down. M. Herriot and Mr Ramsay MacDonald, now the British Premier, presented to the League in September 1924 a resolution which had been elaborated in a draft Protocol by M. Benes and M. Politis. The main features of the Protocol were that arbitration was to be made compulsory, that the aggressor was defined as one who refused to accept the terms of arbitration, and that all members of the League were pledged to apply sanctions as defined in Article XVI against such aggressor. Although the Protocol was unanimously recommended by the League Assembly on October 2, and ratified by Czechoslovakia, by the spring it had been rejected. In Britain a Conservative Government

had replaced Labour, but the failure of the Geneva Protocol cannot wholly be ascribed to this change in British political authority: the opposition of the British Dominions would probably have defeated a Labour Government's effort to obtain an acceptance of this policy. The Dominions disliked intensely the prospect of being committed to a responsibility for issues which might be purely European in nature. Canada, in particular, was affected by American isolationism. "The risks assumed by the different States," the Canadian delegate, Mr Daundurand, declared, "are not equal. We live in a fire-proof house, far from inflammable materials."

France now explored the possibilities of security in another direction. As early as 1922 Germany had suggested a scheme of mutual guarantees on the Rhine frontier. Poincaré had characteristically rejected this overture as disingenuous, but it was twice repeated in 1923. In 1925, although von Hindenburg's succession to the German presidency appeared unfavourable to reconciliation, the scheme advanced a stage further, and Austen Chamberlain was able to secure Briand's approval. On December 1, 1925, the Locarno Pact was signed in London. It included a treaty of mutual guarantee of the Franco-German and Belgo-German frontiers between Germany, Belgium, Britain, France and Italy: a Franco-Polish and Franco-Czechoslovak treaty for mutual assistance in the event of German aggression: and arbitration treaties and conventions between Germany and the adjacent Powers. The Dominions and India were specifically exempted from these obligations. The moral effect of the Pact was immediate: there was a general sense of relief, not only in Britain and France but throughout Europe. In September 1924, Germany had decided to accept the invitation to enter the League, and in March 1926 arrangements were concluded to grant her a permanent seat on the Council. Brazil, who thereby lost her claim to a permanent seat, announced her resignation.

The horizon now seemed to be clear enough to justify an attempt to tackle the thorny problem of disarmament. The optimistic view then prevailing calculated that by 1927 a disarmament conference should be in full session. For this purpose arrangements were made in December 1925

to appoint a Preparatory Commission, in which it was hoped to include the Soviet Republics. This involved a delay. The Soviet delegate to the Lausanne Conference in 1923 had been murdered on Swiss soil, and the Soviet Union was accordingly unwilling to send representatives to that country. At the opening session, May 18, 1926, no Russian delegation attended, but the commission entered on its labours. Serious disagreements were at once disclosed. The French pressed for an international supervision of disarmament measures, a proposal which the American and Italian representatives vigorously opposed: Britain was also disinclined to support the scheme. More serious was the difficulty of defining 'war-potentialities,' which the French, logically but impractically, desired to introduce into these considerations. For what is a war-potentiality? It was pointed out that the United States control of the Panama Canal, for instance, virtually doubling the strength of the American navy, was a potentiality. A country's capacity to make war can be measured by the extent of her rail and road facilities, or by an increase of her population. No such factors can be defined or controlled by a disarmament conference. On the other hand, the British insisted that trained reserves must certainly be regarded as war-potentialities: France and other conscriptionist countries strongly opposed any plan to reduce these forces. The British subsequently gave way on this point, although the German representatives continued to support the British view.

An attempt to limit naval armaments by regulating the number of large battleships had already been reached by the Washington Conference in February 1922. The American proposal was now to proceed on the lines adopted by that Conference, namely to deal with the problem from the regional aspect, by securing an agreement between the naval Powers as to their own sea-forces. France and Italy opposed any plan to consider naval disarmament *ad hoc*, on the ground that all forms of armament are interdependent, and they declined an invitation from the President of the United States to attend another naval conference. When this conference met at Geneva on June 20, 1927, the British and the American proposals were found to be unco-ordinated, and to some degree antagonistic. The Americans proposed to apply the methods of the Washington Conference and to

secure a reduction in numbers among the other categories of ships. Britain proposed a limitation in the size of ships and the calibre of their guns, as well as an extension in the lives of each class—including the battleship-class dealt with at Washington. The alternatives were therefore a system of fixed ratios and 'mathematical parity,' as advocated by the United States: or the 'absolute standard of requirement' which Britain demanded. The American proposals were considered by the British naval authorities to be likely to result in a serious deficiency in the number of cruisers necessary to police British overseas trade. The conference finally broke down on August 4.

The Locarno Pact had given France a promise of security on the German frontier, but she was far from satisfied: she was anxious to explore the possibilities of a more complete settlement. Although hardly observable at the time, the effect of Locarno was actually to substitute British for French supremacy in the League. The Locarno Treaty placed France in a position of dependence on Britain, and, as was frequently revealed in subsequent years, France dared not in the last resort run counter to the British policy, since a serious rift between the two countries might undermine such guarantees as Locarno provided. At the moment, however, the strength of France seemed to be unassailed—if only the existing conditions could be stabilised. France now possessed the largest reserve of gold of any country in Europe and her industry was apparently recovering. It was more essential to her, perhaps, than to any other nation that a permanent international settlement should be reached. With this need in view Briand approached Mr Kellogg, the Secretary of State at Washington, to urge him to use his influence to propose a treaty of everlasting peace between the United States and France. Mr Kellogg refused, on the ground that it would be invidious for America to enter into such a treaty with any one country. But, as a substitute, he suggested a pact, open to all countries, by which they would bind themselves to refrain for all time from waging 'aggressive war.' Much the same proposal had been presented by Poland at the League Assembly in September 1927. This Pact of Paris was signed by fifteen States on August 27, 1928, and before June acceptance of its terms was almost universal, only three of the South

American republics dissenting. M. Litvinov, on behalf of the Soviet Union, then proposed a protocol with Russia's neighbours, for the purpose of bringing the terms of this Paris declaration into force locally, and this was signed in February 1929 by Russia, Poland, Rumania, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

It is symptomatic of the state of public opinion at this period that the Kellogg Pact was hailed as so important a landmark on the road to international peace. Yet, as a practical safeguard it implied little more than a moral gesture, for what belligerent has ever confessed that the war on which he is engaging is 'aggressive'? It is significant also that even this general, abstract undertaking was hedged round with qualifications, demanded by the various Governments concerned. Thus, Britain made the condition that she must rule out from the application of the Pact "certain regions of the world the welfare and integrity of which constitute a special and vital interest for our peace and safety": this was understood to refer to Egypt. France urged that if any one country violated the Pact all the other signatories should be exempted from their pledges. She also claimed her full rights of defence, and this, with other reservations, was included in the interpretation of the commitment.

The Kellogg Pact, however, does not complete the story of the search for security. The internal political fortunes of France were far from stable, and signs of this underlying conflict became more evident as the decade of the twenties reached its close. This unsettlement was partly due to economic causes and to the revelation of financial corruption in French official circles. Eventually—in 1934—the trouble was to reach its climax in the Stavisky scandal, when it became known that this financier had been involved in a fraud amounting to 7,500,000 francs, but had been released from prison—so it was rumoured—by the exertion of influence in high quarters. There was a widespread suspicion that the whole Republican administration was involved, and the panic resulted in serious riots in Paris on February 6, 1934. France had also her troubles over the Church question in Alsace-Lorraine. The Germans had allowed the Church to give religious education in state schools, but the French re-occupation meant that the administration of these

provinces was placed in the hands of Paris officials who had no knowledge of, or sympathy with, local conditions. The 'Cartel des Gauches' ministry caused so much Catholic opposition by attempting a fully secularist policy that Herriot had to compromise on this issue. Alsace-Lorraine seemed at one stage almost to be ripe for rebellion.

The fact that there were already, beneath the surface, many uneasy factors in the French situation was one reason why Briand was impelled to seek further guarantees of peace. But a more direct cause was a growing suspicion that the League was attempting to embrace too wide a jurisdiction. Contemporary continental opinion was inclining more and more to the view that the chief hope of establishing a permanent settlement lay in a narrower field and that it was unrealistic to hope that disputes between far distant countries could be controlled, as the League in theory envisaged. "If I have devoted my energies to the League of Nations," Herriot was saying in January 1925, "... I have done so because in this great institution I have seen the first rough draft of the United States of Europe."

It was in 1929 that Briand launched his scheme of a League within the League, a confederation of all the European members of the League. This proposal conveniently excluded the Soviet Union and Turkey (the latter only entered the League in July 1932). The scheme contemplated both economic and political union. It was not favourably received. Belgium feared that it would make for permanent French ascendancy. Britain recognised that, while the French allies—Belgium, Poland and the Little Entente—would be members, her own dominions would be excluded and her position correspondingly weakened. The scheme and the reaction to it seemed, indeed, to demarcate the separate groups into which the European nations were now sorting themselves. Germany was pressing for equality: France for security: Britain was satisfied with her imperial independence: some of the smaller States, as well as Italy and Germany, were set on a revision of the 1919 treaties and suspected that the exclusion of Turkey and Russia would make for non-revision. Briand's scheme was referred to a special commission of the League, from whose archives it never emerged.

France, therefore, abandoned all hope of guarantee in



these directions, and fell back on the policy of reinforcing her frontiers and of strengthening her allies by granting them loans for military preparations—an ominous symptom that the brief ‘armistice’ period, from which so much had been expected, was already on the wane.

### *The Disarmament Conference*

Meanwhile, however, the attempt to arrive at a solution of the disarmament problem persisted. In 1928 France and Great Britain solved their differences on the naval and military question by a compromise. Britain agreed to waive her objection to the non-inclusion of trained reserves in estimating military strength, while France accepted the British claim of naval limitation by categories of ships, as distinct from limitation by total tonnage. Some harm was done at this juncture by the wide publicity and exaggerated enthusiasm with which the French press hailed this mutual agreement. Neither the American nor the German Governments were favourably disposed towards the terms of the compromise, while it was generally supposed that Britain in reaching this agreement had actually decided to acquiesce in France’s permanent military preponderance.

At the meeting of the Preparatory Commission for disarmament on November 30, 1927, both the Soviet Union and Turkey were for the first time represented. M. Litvinov, the Russian delegate, at once launched a sweeping proposal, namely that all armies, navies and air forces should be abolished, and that the destruction of arms-factories and naval armaments should be put in hand forthwith. The proposal was greeted with derision, and can, indeed, have been intended only to discredit capitalist motives: it succeeded certainly in exposing the utter inability of the Powers to contemplate any measure of genuine and complete disarmament. There was obviously not the least chance that such a drastic policy could be entertained, and, though there is no reason to suppose that the Soviet proposal was insincere, it must be remembered that at this time the Soviet Union relied entirely on the weapon of revolutionary propaganda, and had herself little interest, therefore, in armament preparations. Germany, moreover, was becoming increasingly restive in view of the failure of the

Commission during 1928 to arrive at any scheme of general disarmament. A meeting in Berlin between Litvinov and Count Bernstorff, the German representative, aroused some uneasiness in other European quarters.

Some progress was achieved by the committee which was working on the security-problem, owing largely to the skilful chairmanship of M. Benes, and a 'General Act' which sought to provide machinery for the equitable settlement of international disputes was submitted to the League Assembly in September 1928, but failed eventually to obtain the support of the leading Powers. The Assembly was also concerned with, and provisionally adopted (September 1930) a plan to give financial assistance to the victim of an aggressor. A further step to prepare the way for the full disarmament conference was made by the Naval Treaty of London, which came into force on New Year's Day, 1931. This treaty achieved minor rather than startling reductions, the scrapping of a few battleships by Britain, the United States and Japan, and a limitation of cruiser replacement tonnage. It was significant that even these provisions caused uneasiness in some of the countries concerned. In Britain there was a widespread feeling that naval security had been imperilled, while in Japan the minister who had signed the treaty was presented by a group of anonymous patriots, when he returned to his native shores, with a dagger.

It is more convenient to complete the story of disarmament in this chapter, although the Conference itself belongs chronologically to the next period of history. The storm-clouds were already gathering when the Conference met. The death of Herr Stresemann on October 3, 1929, marked the end of the German policy of 'fulfilment' of the Allied claims, and the emergence of the Nazi party in the elections of September 1930 as a serious political force was a sinister omen: the Nazis had gained 107 seats in the Reichstag instead of the 12 which they had previously held. There were signs of a growing *rapprochement* between the Soviet Union and Italy and Germany—obviously with a view to counter-balancing French influence: and, in addition, the slump had already overtaken the period of post-war recovery. The Preparatory Commission, meanwhile, had arrived at a bare compromise which failed to

satisfy any of the Powers more directly concerned. Trained reservists were not to be reckoned in estimating military effectives : the period of conscript service was to be limited : naval expenditure was to be conditioned by the provisions of the London Treaty, military expenditure to be circumscribed, and aerial material to be restricted numerically and in horse-power. Poison-gas and bacteriological warfare were to be prohibited. Actually, the agenda served to emphasise the contrast between the French and the German outlook. The obligations imposed by the previous treaties on which the agenda relied were interpreted by Germany to mean that the Versailles Treaty was to be applied rigidly. Germany regarded this treaty as a moral contract implying that the other Powers were bound to disarm to her level. But to the French mind Germany's disarmament was a prior condition on which all future arrangements must depend, but which constituted no definite obligation on the part of the other Powers to reduce their own forces.

Two developments occurred on the eve of the Conference, both of which helped to accentuate the atmosphere of suspicion and dissatisfaction. Secret negotiations had been taking place between Dr Schober, on behalf of Austria, and Dr Curtius, the Foreign Minister of Germany, with a view to the establishment of an Austro-German customs union. Italy, Czechoslovakia and France protested against the illegality of this scheme the moment that it was made public. Mr Arthur Henderson, on behalf of Britain, urged that the Council of the League should examine the proposal before any other action was taken. The threatened insolvency of the Austrian Credit-Anstalt which was exposed in May 1931 enabled France to wreck the scheme, and on September 3 the project was abandoned. By no more, however, than a majority of one the Permanent Court of International Justice condemned the proposal, and this result was hailed as a moral victory by both the nations concerned.

The other incident arose in connexion with the uneasy relations between France and Italy on the issue of naval disarmament. France had reluctantly agreed to a parity in capital ships, as a result of a cabled message from America that a refusal on the part of France to agree to this would endanger the proceedings of the Conference. On June 3,

1930, Signor Grandi notified the French Government that Italy would be willing to postpone her naval construction programme if France would do the same. The French action in regard to this offer cannot be excused. Briand replied that no additional ships would be built before December 1, other than 'the dispositions already taken.' But on December 11 it was disclosed that these dispositions already included all the new ships of the 1931 programme, so that the French had conceded nothing. This sharp practice was vehemently denounced in the Italian press, while Mussolini continued to expound the glories of war in speeches which were not calculated to reassure the French mind.

At last the Disarmament Conference met in Geneva on February 2, 1932. The French at once pressed for an international force, and insisted that the whole question of disarmament was bound up with the role armaments were intended to play in order to enforce sanctions under the Covenant. National Governments were to be allowed to maintain small forces, 'lightly armed and engaged for short terms: but no clear indication was forthcoming in the French plan as to the control of munitions in the various States, or as to the command of the League force. The other members of the Conference were unsympathetic to this proposal in view of the national obligations to which they considered themselves already to be committed. Sir John Simon then presented the British case for prohibiting weapons which were 'aggressive' as distinct from defensive armament. But here the failure to arrive at any agreement was due to a difference of opinion as to what constitutes an offensive weapon: Britain considered submarines to be aggressive, while other nations held that they were essential to naval security. Tanks over twenty tons were also described as aggressive, but unfortunately it was known that Britain possessed few submarines and only one heavy tank, so that her proposal to scrap these weapons was regarded as hardly inspired by disinterested motives. Britain also proposed a limit for national armies, Germany and Poland each to have 200,000 men, although Germany's population was twice the size of Poland's. Mr Hoover, the President of the United States, communicated a proposal that all the existing national forces should be reduced by approximately one-

third, with some reservations for Powers with colonial possessions. Italy at once supported the plan, but it was obviously no solution: the existing inequalities would remain, and a small army, like that of Britain, would become so minute as to be unable to perform even normal police functions in a scattered imperial area.

No attempt was made to deal with the question of civil aviation or with the regulation of the private armaments-trade, and, in this respect, it is worth recalling that at the very time when the Conference was meeting and Britain was assuring France that her fears as to German political strength were fully appreciated in London, an advertisement was appearing in a German paper to the effect that a British firm would be happy to supply "war material of all kinds" to any customer.

The fundamental cause of the failure of the Conference was, however, the refusal of the Allies to disarm to Germany's level. In 1930, Britain was actually spending some £32,000,000 more on armaments than she had budgeted for in 1913, and the corresponding increase of expenditure was far greater in the case of both France and the United States.<sup>1</sup> Germany's plea became, therefore, a deliberate claim that her right to rearm up to the level of the other Powers should be acknowledged. A desperate five days was spent in searching for a compromise which would cover the two antagonistic standpoints. The impossibility of doing more than arrive at a verbal formula sounded the death-knell of the Conference. The General Commission met again in February 1933, but by this time Hitler had become the German Chancellor. On March 27, Japan notified her intention to resign from the League, and Mussolini's newspaper press uttered threats of similar action on the part of Italy, denouncing the League as "a limited liability company under the control of Britain, France, and (indirectly) of America." An eleventh-hour endeavour to save the situation was made in March 1933 by Ramsay MacDonald who brought with him a new draft convention. The main proposals of this draft were that there should be a preliminary period during which there

<sup>1</sup> These increased sums must not be taken, of course, as indicating a corresponding increase in the quantity of armaments, since the rise of the cost of material has to be taken into calculation.

should be no reduction of the forces of the armed Powers but supervision of existing armaments and a short-term service for all continental armies. In the second period the disarmament provisions of the convention would be put into force on a basis of complete equality. The convention was accepted provisionally, full consideration being postponed till the autumn. Arthur Henderson in the interval toured the European capitals on what was described as a 'disarmament pilgrimage.' Curiously enough, when the Conference was resumed in October 1933, the general tone was more optimistic. Even the German representative raised no criticism as to the draft. On October 14, however, the blow fell. Germany announced her withdrawal from the Conference, and her resignation from the League followed soon after. Hitler professed a willingness to make some modifications in the German re-armament plans, but the publication of the German budget, with its enormous increases in military expenditure, drove France to announce that no guarantees could now be devised which would make it possible for her to assent to any scheme recognising the legitimacy of German re-armament. The Soviet Union proposed that the Conference should be kept in being by transferring its activities to an exploration of possible means of security. But the grim realities were now too apparent to be ignored. The armaments race was restarting. The attempt to find a settlement had failed. The dismal prospect of war-preparation with all its implications was now uppermost in the minds of the European Governments. The shadow of a second world-war had perceptibly lengthened.

### *The General Strike in Britain*

There can be no question that one of the most dangerous features of the post-war world was the insecurity of its economic foundations. The full consequences of this insecurity were to be experienced in the slump, but beneath the surface there were already signs that the position was far less satisfactory than European statesmen liked to suppose. Economic insecurity must inevitably affect the international political structure. It was one of the direct causes of the general drive towards that self-sufficient

nationalism which was itself inevitably antagonistic to any scheme of international unity. Ultimately, the nations could not arrive at a peace-solution in the political field if economically they were already at war.

In Britain, as we have seen, the Conservative economic policy was to reinstate London as the financial centre of the world. The restoration of the gold standard meant that while the bankers and financiers benefited, the industrialists were hard hit. While Great Britain had agreed to pay twenty shillings for every pound she owed as war-debt her own debtors were paying her a mere fraction of the money they had borrowed. The only course open to the industrialists was, therefore, first to reduce costs, which meant that wages must be cut down : and, secondly, to reorganise and restrict production. Of all the major export industries coal was the chief sufferer, and the difficulty here was complicated by the resolute opposition of the mine-owners to any compulsory amalgamations.

In 1921 the miners threatened to resist wage-cuts by a strike, and the Railway and Transport Unions were only persuaded by Lloyd George's energetic intervention not to come out on a sympathetic strike. The miners, however, downed tools from April 1 till July 4, the loss incurred to the State being in the neighbourhood of £250,000,000. Troubles were restarted in 1925 by the mine-owners announcing that they found it necessary to introduce a further cut in wages. Mr Baldwin prevented a strike by the desperate expedient of granting a subsidy of £24,000,000 for one year to the owners. A Royal Commission was appointed and recommended that, while wages should be reduced, the royalties which were being paid to the land-owners, merely because it was on their property that the collieries happened to be situated, should be abolished. It is a curious commentary on the lengths to which the rights of property extend under the capitalist system that landlords should be entitled to a levy on every ton of coal which is brought to the surface on their ground, though they themselves may not have rendered any service whatever in this operation. But, although the royalty-principle is perhaps the most glaring example of the degree to which industry is unnecessarily burdened by rent, the Government ignored the proposal and confined its attention to the other pro-

position, announcing in 1926 its approval of a 13½ per cent. cut in the miners' wages.

The Miners' Federation at once protested and the Government was faced with the imminent possibility of a reopening of the strike. The miners now handed over their case to the Trades Union Council, since it was evident that the wage-cut policy, if adopted as regards coal, would rapidly be applied to the other industries. The entry of the T.U.C. into the scene of negotiations meant only one thing—that the breakdown of the conference would result not in a single but a general strike. Had the Government been consistent in its determination to regard a general strike as illegal, its course was clear: it should have refused to negotiate with the T.U.C. The Government, however, entered into deliberations with the T.U.C. without uttering any protest. Actually, the T.U.C. proved more accommodating to the owners than the Miners' Federation: it showed itself willing to sacrifice the miners' claims and compromise. Indeed, by the evening of May 3 the T.U.C. representatives had arrived at the conference-room with the terms of a settlement in their pocket. They were met with the announcement that a local strike, which the T.U.C. leaders had not authorised and of which they had not even been informed, had broken out in the offices of *The Daily Mail*, where the compositors had refused to set up what they regarded as a peculiarly provocative article denouncing the miners. Mr Baldwin, on behalf of the Cabinet, demanded an immediate official repudiation of this action. Mr Thomas hurried back to obtain this repudiation from the negotiating committee of the T.U.C. The necessary motion was passed and signed, and the T.U.C. leaders returned to Mr Baldwin's room. It was now late in the evening. To their astonishment they found the room dark and deserted. Mr Baldwin and his colleagues had gone to bed and had decided to break off the negotiations without any attempt to reach a settlement, even though the repudiation for which the Cabinet had asked had been given.

The Government had, in fact, decided to plunge the country into a general strike, calculating that it could break the strike in view of the extensive preparations which for several weeks past it had been designing. It is doubtful, however, whether this perilous bluff would have succeeded



had the strike been led by men who were whole-heartedly determined to fight. As it was, Ramsay MacDonald and J. H. Thomas were as terrified of the possibilities of the strike, and as anxious to call it off, as the Conservative leaders were determined that it should take place. One of the fatal mistakes of which the T.U.C. was guilty was to call out the printers, with the result that the Government was able hastily to circulate an official journal and acquire a monopoly of propaganda. The T.U.C. case was presented only by a roughly improvised paper, unable under the general paralysis of movement to secure the same facilities for distribution which was at the disposal of the Government. The public had therefore little opportunity of hearing anything but the Government's side of the case. An appeal by Dr Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, for a negotiated peace was officially suppressed: there must be no peace save by surrender. The public were kept entirely ignorant of the fact that it was the Government which had deliberately declared war. Sir John Simon endeavoured to frighten the workers into submission by declaring that legally each one of them was liable for damages and that the personal possessions of every leader of the strike could be seized up to the last farthing.

Two and a half million workers had downed tools, and for six days the industrial machinery of the nation was at a standstill. The T.U.C. were anxious, however, to capitulate on any terms and on May 12 they gave in unconditionally. The miners held out until the following December, and then accepted a reduction in wages. The Government had been victorious all along the line and made effectual use of its victory. The Government notified the employers that they were under no obligation to take back the workers who had obeyed their Union's instructions. The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act was passed, robbing the Unions of many of the powers which they had gained since 1906. The whole Union movement was weakened, and what might have developed into a revolutionary situation was averted. But it was averted mainly because those in control of the strike were themselves desperately afraid of the possibility of their own victory.

*The Soviet Union*

The most sensational effect of the war had been the Russian revolution, not only because it resulted in the overthrow of the traditional order and the substitution of a type of civilization which had never before been attempted on a large scale, but also because a convulsion of this kind in so large a territory—the Russian Empire covered a sixth of the world's surface—was bound to cause repercussions in Europe and Asia. It was difficult for the average man to form any balanced opinion as to the values of the Soviet experiment. On the one hand, the political partisans of Russia tended to exaggerate her virtues and to ignore or avoid mention of the evils and mistakes of her revolutionary order: on the other hand, the British press and other organs of propaganda were concerned to present the Soviet system as a proof that socialism and the overthrow of class and property-privileges could only cause tyranny and starvation. Between these extremes it became somewhat difficult for the middle-classes to comprehend that Russia, like most other countries, is neither infallible nor incapable of great achievements, neither impeccable nor diabolical, neither guiltless of oppression and cruelty nor without a record of cultural and material progress to her credit.

The reactions both of those who visualised the Soviet Union as an utopia, and of those who, in Mr Churchill's words, pictured bolshevism as a "foul baboonery" are easy enough to understand. The Soviet order repudiated all the radical principles on which capitalist civilization has rested, it was wholly disreputable from the standpoint of capitalist morals. If it were to succeed, it would necessarily challenge the system on which the rest of Europe was founded. Nor was this controversy confined to the political field: it extended into the ethical and religious realm. Since the Soviet Republics had officially denied the existence of God it seemed essential for professing Christians to show that the results of this disavowal had been disastrous. Blasphemous atheism must not be successful, and therefore the average orthodox mind was ready to seize hungrily on any evidence forthcoming as to a low standard of life under the Soviet regime, or as to the existence of brutal penal methods and wholesale corruption.

It is essential that these prejudicial tendencies should be borne clearly in mind, since they alone explain the trend of the political policy of the Powers throughout this period. Faced with the alternatives of fascism and bolshevism British Conservative statesmen always regarded fascism as the lesser of the two evils. Fascism might threaten the Empire, but it was a system which at least retained some of the familiar social landmarks. Chamberlain, as we shall presently see, was convinced until the rape of Prague that it was possible to arrive at a gentlemanly understanding with the Fascist dictators and so to avert imperial war. But the Soviet system represented something infinitely deadly and insidious, an undermining of the social fabric and a negation both of the respectabilities and, indeed, of the orthodox religious tradition. Consequently, the average diplomat dreaded above all other developments the spread of the Communist poison beyond the Soviet frontiers. If Germany or Italy were guilty of offences which disturbed the European peace, Conservative policy was prepared to deal delicately with the situation : but, if the Soviet Union in any way offended, drastic action and vigorous protest were immediately forthcoming. As we trace the period of the last decade before the second war, we cannot but be aware that Conservative attention was consistently turned to the extreme Left as the direction from which the real peril would arise. The tragic mistake of British diplomacy is that, until too late, it failed to realise that the danger was materialising from exactly the opposite quarter, that the protestants whom it sought to appease were the real villains of the drama, while any degree of effective collective security depended in the last resort on the co-operation of the very Power which it wished to avoid.

It is worth while again recalling that the Russian revolution had in its first years to contend against the open hostility of all the major Powers. Admiral Koltchak attacked from the east with an army made up of 90,000 Czarist Russians, 6,000 British, 7,000 Americans, 28,000 Japanese, and Italian, French, Serbian, Czech and Polish contingents. Denikin in the south was armed with Allied equipment. Both forces were defeated by the Bolsheviks. The expedition of General Yudenitch advancing from the Estonian frontier came nearer to victory. Poincaré urged that an Allied

army should be sent to his assistance, but Lloyd George resisted. "To attempt military intervention," he declared in the House in reply to Mr Churchill and his supporters, "would be the greatest act of stupidity that any Government could possibly commit." Yudenitch meanwhile had pressed forward to the outskirts of Leningrad. Lenin is said to have contemplated abandoning the city, but allowed himself to be over-ruled. Trotsky was sent to organise the defence. He found Zinoviev, who was in charge of the city, a victim of defeatist despair. The ragged, half-starved population, however, roused by Trotsky's eloquence, flung themselves into the barricades. For three days they met the fierce onslaught of Allied guns and tanks. Twenty thousand of the revolutionaries were killed, but Yudenitch was hurled back. The frost-bitten rabble-army which had abandoned the struggle against the Germans was now galvanised with a new energy. Denikin's lines were pierced and his forces routed, while Koltchak was captured and shot. The enemy on more than a dozen fronts was defeated. Mention has already been made of the Polish invasion. The fear that Poland would be crushed and that the geographical adjacency of Germany and Russia might result in a Red Germany persuaded Lloyd George to offer assistance to the Poles. As early as March 1919 he had circulated a memorandum at the Peace Conference which declared that, in his view, the "greatest danger . . . in the present situation is, that Germany may throw in her lot with Bolshevism and place her resources, her brains, her vast organising power at the disposal of the revolutionary fanatics whose dream is to conquer the world for Bolshevism by force of arms."

The mood in which the Soviet Union emerged from this struggle for self-existence was inevitably that of a bitter hostility towards its enemies, the capitalist Powers. The Red Army was therefore guilty of atrocities towards its victims which were only equalled by the savage cruelty of the Whites. The victory had been won at a heavy price. In two months of fighting alone the Bolsheviks had lost 150,000 men. The Allies, defeated in the military field, now blockaded the Soviet Union economically. The Soviet Union was exiled from the rest of the world both politically and in trade relations. Lenin was faced with a situation in which the Russian towns were seething with counter-

revolutionary intrigue, while the dispossessed classes, the Church, the agents of the hostile Powers, were seeking every opportunity to overthrow the Soviet Government. Lenin took drastic steps to crush this sedition. In these bitter 'war' years the number of political prisoners shot by the Cheka police is reckoned as at least 70,000, and by some commentators has been placed as high as two million. In 1921 an unprecedented drought led to a famine in which millions perished. The wretched communications which the Czarist regime had bequeathed to this huge territory made it impossible to transport sufficient food to the starving populations. It was easy enough for the capitalist critics of Russia to point to the failure of the socialist experiment and to prophesy an early collapse of the revolution. Had not Lenin been a leader of titanic energy and invincible faith, he must have abandoned all hope of solving the apparently insurmountable problems confronting him. He persisted, however, in his task. To meet the economic emergencies he introduced the New Economic Policy which relaxed the Government control of industry and, as a temporary expedient, allowed private trading. Distribution by privately owned agencies was permitted to work on a profit-basis. But the suggestion that N.E.P. represented a permanent return to capitalist principles was as completely falsified as the forecast that the Soviet regime would crumble within a few years.

On the contrary, as a result largely of Lenin's genius, order began to emerge from the general chaos. It was an order which in many respects was unlike that of any previous type of civilization. The general direction of the Soviet activities was in the hands of the Communist Party, but this body resembled a religious order rather than a political organization. Communist members numbered less than three millions and were admitted only after a rigorous period of probation and training for their vocation. Their mission was to see that the machinery of the State was worked efficiently, but never themselves to expect financial reward. In some respects the political-economic structure which was being erected proved itself an amazing success. The union of seven republics, comprising widely different races and cultures, achieved a unity and an equality more complete than that attained by any imperial system. The educational

record has also been remarkable. In 1914 seventy-three per cent. of the Russian population were illiterate: by 1941 illiteracy had been reduced to ten per cent. In 1914 seven million pupils were attending elementary schools, while only seventy-one universities existed: in 1941 there were thirty million pupils in primary and secondary schools, and 716 universities. Those who argue that the education given is heavily tinged with Marxist propaganda should remember that education in English schools can hardly be said to be free of a national and imperialist bias. On the reverse side of the picture must be recorded the fact that the attempt to enlist the co-operation of the peasants in the gigantic undertaking of agricultural reconstruction met with stubborn resistance, and that this resistance was eventually overcome only by methods of ruthless coercion. No organised political opposition was sanctioned under the Soviet constitution, and the reign of terror instituted under the United State Political Department (the OGPU) produced the worst features of secret-police abuse: but, as against this, it must be remembered that there is no country in which so full an opportunity is provided for criticism and suggestion in regard to industrial administration as in the Soviet Union. In every factory, mine, workshop, ship and college there are committees elected by the main body of workers or students: and to these committees the Government refers its plans for forthcoming legislation, the committees freely expressing their complaints as to the manner in which the work is carried out. Correspondingly, legal administration is ultra-democratic, in so far as the judges are elected by citizens or Soviets, and have regularly to meet their constituents, answer any questions which may be put to them, and justify the sentences which they have given in the preceding period. This strange admixture of success and failure, of democracy and dictatorship, of liberty and oppression makes it peculiarly difficult to form any single conclusion as to Soviet conditions. The superficial judgment in which visitors to Russia have freely indulged—whether they are enthusiastically optimistic or violently condemnatory—must almost inevitably be misleading.

Lenin had died before the constitution of 1923 was put into operation, his place having been taken by Joseph Stalin. With Stalin's succession the fundamental dilemma with

which the Soviet Union was faced became acute. The Bolsheviks had calculated that after four years of devastating war the world-revolution would overthrow the capitalist system, and that, accordingly, Russia could go forward with her socialist programme hand in hand with other socialist States. In this estimate of the probabilities the Soviet authorities were woefully at fault. There had been the brief triumph of Bela Kun in Hungary, and for a moment it had seemed that the revolutionary movement might take root in Germany. But the Social Democrats had failed to rally round Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg, and the Liberal Republic had been willing to turn to its enemies—the war-minded military nationalists—in order to crush the Spartacist menace. Although the European Governments were eventually forced to admit that the Soviet order had come to stay and had gradually opened up limited diplomatic and trade relations with Russia, they were careful to regard her as an outcast—when she applied to be admitted to the League her membership was granted only in the face of several protests. The Powers were determined to protect themselves as far as possible from any penetration of Russian propaganda. Britain recognised Russia on February 1, 1924, but the United States did not do so until November 16, 1933.

Stalin was therefore faced with the necessity of abandoning all immediate hope of world-conversion. Socialism must be established in Russia alone, and the Soviet Union must accordingly be made independent of capitalist exports. The first Five Year Plan was launched in 1928. Seven hundred experts forming the 'Gosplan' drew up a scheme which they submitted to the Supreme Economic Council. In spite of the reports with which they had been furnished only a vague estimate of the possibilities could be formed. The industrial scheme appeared to be fantastic, but remarkable results were achieved. A pipe-line was constructed, 600 miles long, to carry oil from Baku to Batum. At Dneprostroi the river was dammed in order to turn giant turbines. At Magnitogorsk in the Urals an immense steel plant was constructed, with coal drawn from mines 2,000 kilometres distant. At Baku the workers were housed in a new garden-city in the hills above the old town, and were taken to and from their work by an electric railway.

Clubs, schools and hospitals were opened for city-workers, and extraordinary facilities were designed to give them and their families free holidays in the south. But this vast industrial enterprise in capital goods inevitably meant that the supply of consumption goods for the present must be sacrificed. To concentrate on the production of plant and machinery necessarily resulted in the restricted production of consumers' goods. The standard of living, accordingly, remained low, and considerable economic inequalities began to be apparent. Manual workers received high rations, and trades-union members had access to shops where prices were low. Kulaks and 'nepmen,' on the contrary, received no ration-tickets. In most of the shops the stocks were still wretchedly poor.

On its agricultural side the Plan was less successful. In 1927 there were twenty-five million peasant-proprietors in Russia. The N.E.P. helped to create a new capitalist class of kulaks—farmers who hired the poorer peasants, much as the landowners had employed their peasants under the old regime. The desire to establish state farms (sovkhosi) and collective farms (kolkhosi), where the peasants shared the property, met with intense opposition. The Communist Party propaganda in favour of this large-scale farming failed to have much effect, for the peasants and agriculturalists were temperamentally conservative and resented State interference. In 1929 a relentless campaign was started against both the kulaks and the peasants. In retaliation machinery was wrecked and cattle were slaughtered. As the world-depression became more acute and prices were falling it was increasingly necessary that the Soviet Union should export a larger amount of grain in order to pay for the machinery which was desperately required. This entailed further privation: less grain could be allocated for home-consumption. The peasants marched on Moscow, and for a moment it seemed as though civil war might break out. Faced with these dangers Stalin introduced a more conciliatory policy, relying on voluntary persuasion and a wide distribution of cinemas and clubrooms in the agricultural areas. A passport system was introduced to discourage peasant emigration to the towns and depriving newcomers of access to the shops. These measures gradually attained their purpose. By July 1935 nearly



eighty-three per cent. of the peasants were permanently at work on state and collective farms.

The second Five Year Plan covered the 1933-37 period. It aimed largely at improving the primitive organization of transport, which seriously handicapped all forms of Soviet development, and the appalling shortage of housing conditions in the cities, especially in Moscow, where thirty per cent. of the population were living five to a room. By December 1936, citizen-rights under the new Constitution had been restored to the kulaks and the priests. Religious freedom was by now permitted, in the sense that the Church was allowed to exercise its functions so long as it could raise its own funds, and with the qualification that any public religious education of children was still forbidden. Whatever view is taken as to the success of the second Plan, it must be noted that, while the capitalist countries were suffering severely from the slump, Russian production was extending at full pressure, and that no unemployment existed throughout the whole of the Soviet Union.

### *Stalin's Policy*

What kind of civilization had this daring adventure in fact produced? Had it provided greater liberty and opportunity for its subjects, or was it merely a reincarnation of a police-ridden autocracy? Did it constitute a threat to the settlement which the capitalist democracies were painfully attempting to establish, or had it any contribution to make to the peace-order? As we have seen, European statesmen were in no doubt as to the answer, and, as we have also seen, they were subsequently proved wrong in their main conclusions. They had believed at first that the Soviet Union could be overthrown by military pressure. When military efforts failed, they trusted to a blockade, on the assumption that enforced isolation would bring about the collapse of so primitive and ill-constructed a system. When the years had passed and the system showed no signs of collapse, they cautiously entered into such political and trade associations as were necessary, while still maintaining safeguards against any spread of the Soviet disease. It is natural enough that the Western Powers should have adopted this standpoint. Not only did the Soviet order repudiate

the fundamental principles on which the capitalist order was based, but Moscow was the headquarters of an organization curiously similar to that of the Church of Rome, with local 'Churches' (Communist parties) of varying strength in each country, faithfully reflecting the policy of the Comintern. Those who identified bolshevism and fascism overlooked the fact that the Soviet Union desired no territorial expansion. Peace was essential to Soviet development, and, unlike the capitalist democracies and the fascist Powers, she was not driven by her economy to find an outlet for capital investment and so to obtain imperial or indirect political control over those countries to which loans had been made.

The Stalin policy of abandoning the attempt to foment world-revolution and of concentrating on the effort to build up socialism in the Soviet Union alone, led to two important developments. In the first place it became more than ever desirable for the Soviet Union to pierce the boycott and to establish fuller relations with the capitalist Powers for trade purposes. Long before Stalin's accession to power Chicherin had been dispatched to the Genoa Conference (April 1922) to secure a foreign loan and to persuade the Powers to relax their economic blockade. Lloyd George, in the teeth of French opposition, had insisted that Russia should be heard. The conference-members awaited with curiosity this delegate from the realms of outer barbarism, and it came almost as a shock to their anticipations when Comrade Chicherin arrived immaculately arrayed in top hat, frock coat and white gloves. It was a still greater shock when Chicherin proceeded to address the assembly in excellent French and then translated his speech into perfect English. At this period Raymond Poincaré was still in the saddle, his policy, as has already been described, having the effect mainly of discrediting Walther Rathenau, who stood for fulfilment, and thereby playing into the hands of Hugo Stinnes who was determined to defy the Allies and restore a belligerent Germany. The Soviet Union, despite Chicherin's eloquence, was equally treated as an outcast and her pleas ignored. On one of the evenings of the Conference session Chicherin and Rathenau met secretly and put their names to the draft treaty of Rapallo (April 16, 1922). The two outcasts had joined hands. "Is

not this treaty an infringement of the Treaty of Versailles ? ” the Soviet delegation was asked. One of its members replied, “ Treaty of Versailles ? I know nothing about it.”

This incident is of significance as it indicates the trend of the German attitude towards the Soviet Union. Both Germany and Italy were prepared to cultivate friendly relations with Russia, so long as she was excluded from the European family, and, like themselves, belonged to the ‘have-nots.’ Italy was, indeed, the first Western Power to accord full diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. When, however, the Litvinov policy brought the Soviet Union into the League, Russian Communism became Hitler’s chief *bête-noir*. The fall of Litvinov and the consistent refusal of Britain to seek Russian co-operation drove the Soviet Union back into the arms of Germany.

The other result of Stalin’s decision to abandon for the present all hope of world-revolution was to create an opposition within Russia. This body of opposition opinion represented the claim that true Marxist principles were being infringed. Trotsky, whose conversion to Bolshevism had always been suspect, declared that ‘socialism in Russia alone’ was a policy doomed to failure. Although his military capacities had saved the revolution in its most critical hours, he and Zinoviev were expelled from the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in June 1927, and from the Party itself in the following November. How far the Trotskyist conspiracy had reached formidable dimensions, how far it amounted to a serious attempt to foment civil war and underground sabotage, may never be completely known. Certainly the Soviet Government assumed that it was a serious peril. The murder of Kirov, the High Commissioner in Leningrad (December 1934), was an early proof that the Trotskyists had embarked on a terrorist campaign. The Soviet Government at once took vigorous action. 117 persons were ‘liquidated.’ In August 1936 a series of arrests and treason trials commenced and continued with bewildering rapidity. Zinoviev and Kamenev, Stalin’s two closest colleagues after Lenin’s death, were arrested and later shot. A few months later, Radek—a leading Bolshevik journalist, Pyatakov—organiser of Russian industry—with the diplomats, Sokolnikov and Karakhan, were arrested and tried for treason. In June

1937 eight of the leading military generals, including Marshal Tukhachevsky, General Uborevich—victor over Denikin and Wrangel—General Kork—Director of the War College in Moscow—and General Putna were found guilty and shot. These are but a few of the prominent figures who were victims of the purge. The total number of executions is difficult to estimate.

One of the most astonishing features of these successive trials were the abject confessions of the prisoners, confessions which in most cases cannot have been offered with any hope that the sentence of death would be relaxed. By the time that these trials were in process the Powers were adopting a more conciliatory attitude towards the Soviet Union, and France, indeed, had entered into an alliance. But these repeated purges damaged Soviet status considerably. If these stories of widespread intrigue in high places were true, if these hitherto trusted officials were as guilty as the charges against them alleged, then the Soviet system, it was thought, must be riddled with treason and not nearly so stable as its advocates alleged. If, however, the rot had not spread then so violent a purge was inexcusable. It must be remembered, however, that the trials were given the utmost publicity, so that the Government was apparently confident of popular support against the conspirators.

### *Fascism in Italy*

Italy was the other major State in which an apparently new type of Government was set up in the early post-war period. The immediate effect of the war was to create a pacifist attitude generally throughout the country, but a number of secret terrorist societies had begun to emerge. The first group of Fascists was formed in Milan during 1919, but it was a small group, numbering even in January 1921 no more than thirty-three members. In 1920 discontent, due to economic conditions and to disillusionment with President Wilson and the result of the war, was rampant and several serious strikes broke out. Italy was a victorious ally, but had been baulked of her spoils. The revolutionary movement grew in strength and soviets were formed, six hundred factories being seized and the Red flag flown triumphantly over them. The workers held out for seventy-five days and

then their courage failed them: they surrendered to the owners. In January 1921, the Communists ceased to co-operate with the Socialist Party, and the split finally weakened the Left.

Benito Mussolini had at first been prepared to support the revolutionaries and, indeed, sounded the trades-union leaders as to the possibility of taking command. His offer was not accepted, and when the tide of fortune turned against the strikers he negotiated with the owners and the bankers. The owners were willing to make use of Mussolini's small band, but it was necessary for this purpose that the police and army should turn a blind eye on Fascist mob-activities. The price of this official sanction was that Mussolini should cease to support d'Annunzio who was at this time in possession of Fiume. Mussolini had collected funds for d'Annunzio in the hour of his triumph, but was willing enough now to throw him over and support the Government. In return for this *volte-face* his 'army' was given an indirectly official status, in the sense that it was permitted to harry Socialist organizations by acts of hooligan violence. In June 1924, the Socialist leader, Matteotti, was murdered three days after he had made a speech strongly criticising the Government. A storm of popular indignation was aroused by this crime and Mussolini, accepting this verdict, was prepared to describe it as an "abominable outrage."

Mussolini's path to power was not, however, easy. Bands of imitation blackshirts were growing up, over which he had no control. The Liberal Government was constantly complaining of Mussolini's failure to prevent these lawless acts. There is some evidence to show that at this stage he re-opened negotiations with the Socialists: in August 1921, he had certainly signed a pact of mutual assistance. The owners became suspicious of his intentions and there were angry protests against the leader within the Fascist ranks themselves. Mussolini was compelled to resign his leadership. "Can Fascism do without me?" he exclaimed, "certainly it can, but I can do very well without it." Two months later he had managed to reinstate himself, and this time his fortunes were shown to be rising. The Liberal Government was too weak to cope with the increasing disorder, the Left had failed to seize power. The army,

the industrialists and financiers were anxious for a strong rule which would provide a secure barrier against Communist revolution. Mussolini held back until he was assured that the Crown would accept his claims and that his army would not be required to fight—he himself waited at Milan until a telegram was received that all was safe. The march on Rome was completed by October 30, 1922. The King and the new Premier drove through the streets of the capital reviewing the cheering Fascist legions.

The purely opportunist nature of Mussolini's aims, the fact that he had been prepared to go either Left or Right, to lead the revolutionaries or to throw in his lot with the owning classes, to support d'Annunzio or to desert him, must be appreciated in arriving at any estimate of Italian Fascism. It was not a creed. It possessed no philosophy. Mussolini's dominating ambition was to secure power for himself. He had the gift of bombastic oratory and a considerable organising ability: but none of his utterances disclose the type of passionate conviction which has characterised, for example, Hitler's speeches. "To-day," he declared, "Fascism is a party, a militia, a corporation. That is not enough. It must become a manner of life." "Live dangerously. If I advance, follow me. If I retreat, kill me. If I die, avenge me." "War is to man what maternity is to woman. I do not believe in perpetual peace." This is the voice of one who lives in well-sounding but shallow heroics, who is sensitive to display and stage-effect, but not of one who is animated by any deep and positive purpose. It is the mind of the adventurer, not of the statesman.

The Fascist administration under Mussolini's competent hand was effective in many directions. Italy is a poor country. Two-thirds of her soil is sterile, and she possessed no colonies from which to obtain raw material. She was, therefore forced to import from foreign lands her coal, iron, petrol and cotton. Her exports consisted only of wine, olives, fruit, woodwork, leatherwork and glass, and the balance was contributed largely by tourist-trade and by the remittances which Italian emigrants sent back from overseas for the support of their families. Mussolini substituted electric-power for coal. Agriculture and other forms of industry were placed under central control. In every district syndicates of employers and employees were founded,

and both strikes and lock-outs were prohibited. Disputes between employers and labour were to be settled by a court, the judges of which were appointed by Mussolini as Duce. Only pro-Fascist bodies were recognised. By 1927 Mussolini had obtained absolute command. The Fascist Grand Council, whose policy was secret, was given the right to initiate all forms of legislation: the Cabinet, appointed solely by Mussolini, passed laws by orders in Council.

The only authority within the State which was likely to challenge this concentration of power was the Church. The Fascists had absorbed the Catholic Boy Scout organization, and at the age of fourteen all children were required to take an oath of allegiance to the Duce. The Pope protested, and Mussolini at once retaliated by suppressing all societies run by the *Azione Cattolica*—the Church society controlling recreational clubs for girls and boys and adult classes. In 1931 a compromise was reached under which the Church was to confine her activities among the young to religious instruction, while the Fascists were to manage all recreational institutions. On his side Mussolini had already created the Vatican State, and the Pope was recognised as the sovereign of this small political entity. The quarrel between the Church and the Italian Government which had lasted for a century was settled: The Pope was no longer a prisoner in his palace, and Catholic opinion throughout the world was inclined to greet Mussolini as a loyal son of the Church.

It was in the international field, however, that the Fascist spirit was bound to prove most dangerous. Unlike the Soviet Union, which sought no imperial expansion, Mussolini must in any event have aimed at extending Italian dominion. The economic system on which Fascism was based remained an order of production for profit and therefore required a competitive drive for the world-market. Moreover, the Italian Fascists smarted with a sense of the wrongs done to Italy at Versailles, coloured perhaps with an inferiority complex aggravated by their recollection of Italy's none-too-brilliant military record in the last war. Mussolini dreamed that the mantle of the Cæsars had fallen on him and that it was his destiny to restore Italy to a position of greatness: and the way to this was the path of military adventure.

Mussolini might be swayed by militarist romanticism and prone to indulge in heroics when addressing his supporters : but he was a realist in the field of diplomacy, too good a realist, in fact, to risk attempting objectives which he could not at the moment attain. The Corfu incident had alarmed the League, but thereafter Mussolini appeared to be more reasonable, and foreign statesmen were gradually reassured as to his intentions. Franco-Italian relations until 1928 were uneasy, however, since Italy was clearly on the side of the revisionists, while French security depended on the inviolability of Versailles. The British had ceded their territory of Jubaland to the Italians at the Peace Conference, and the Dodecanese passed to them in 1924. But the French were less accommodating. In Tunisia the number of Italians exceeded that of the French, although Tunisia was a French protectorate. The international status of Tangier was finally established in June 1925, but the terms of the statute had been arranged by Britain, France and Spain. Italy, claiming North African interests, refused to recognise the validity of this arrangement and protested at her exclusion from the deliberations.

Yugoslavian anxiety as to Italian intentions was relieved by a pact which Mussolini signed with that country on January 27, 1924, and in which Italy indicated that she looked for her extended sphere of influence in the direction of the Balkans and the Danube. Italy energetically sought the friendship of Hungary, and to a lesser extent of Rumania, though here she was determined to do nothing to disturb her own friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia remained convinced, however, that diplomatic pressure from Rome was secretly plotting to encircle her. The chief theatre of these encircling activities was Albania. A treaty between that country and Italy was signed at Tirana on November 27, 1926, and appeared to create a virtual Italian protectorate over the whole territory. In March 1927, Italy accused Yugoslavia of making preparations to invade Albania. Yugoslavia denied the charges and signed a treaty with France on November 11, 1927. Eleven days later a second Treaty of Tirana was published which was unashamedly a military alliance and to which evidently Albania had been forced to agree. The



increasing tension between France and Italy, caused by these developments, was only relieved by the offer of M. Briand to make a settlement counter-balancing French ascendancy in the west Mediterranean and anti-French combinations in the East.

One of Mussolini's first acts was to carry out a forced italianization of the portions of the Tyrol which had been handed over to her by Austria. The efforts of the German-speaking population to resist this policy—this resistance taking the form in some cases of holding secret 'catacomb' schools where education was given in German — was vigorously crushed by the Fascist Government. But these incidents had strangely little effect on German-Italian relations which grew more and more cordial in view of the anti-French trend of Italian diplomacy. A treaty of conciliation between Germany and Italy was signed in December 1926, following a commercial agreement in 1925. Even in these pre-Hitler days this increasing *rapprochement* was viewed with some misgivings by Allied statesmen.

### *Calm before the Storm*

We have dealt with some of the dangers which were developing in this comparatively settled interval, but it is necessary to remember that in the main the League system seemed to be making good progress, and that this period may be termed almost the 'golden age' of the post-war settlement. Germany had entered the League, and reparation payments were forthcoming punctually from Germany under the Dawes Plan. The Young Plan which superseded it on May 17, 1930, was drawn up by a committee on which Germany was fully represented. In those deliberations, indeed, it was not Germany but Britain, through the vigorous voice of Philip Snowden, which raised the difficulties. Philip Snowden complained that Britain was not being given a fair deal in the matter of war-debts, and his protests were supported by the whole body of British opinion.

The arrangements as to the final settlement of German reparations were based on what was to prove an over-optimistic calculation as to Germany's capacity to continue to pay annuities even at a reduced rate. Meanwhile, plans were concluded for the withdrawal of the armies of occupa-

tion from the Rhineland. On September 14, 1929, the British forces began their trek homewards. Stresemann lived to see this first glimpse of the fulfilment of his hopes. He died on October 3.

The reparations problem solved, Locarno signed, the disarmament conference about to meet, the Allied troops withdrawn, Germany admitted to the League, the Soviet Union—though not as yet admitted to the League—in a mood which favoured co-operation, and Litvinov succeeding Chicherin as Foreign Commissar—all these developments seemed to be portents of a return to normality and order. It is impossible to turn the pages of the current literature of this time without recognising the complete absence of any realization that this apparent security was soon to crumble. We are inevitably unaware of the future, but in the fuller historic perspective which is now available, we can hardly fail to marvel that the tragedy which was so rapidly to materialise did not cast a more perceptible shadow on the consciousness both of politicians and statesmen. Perhaps the moral may be drawn from the words of T. E. Lawrence, although his comparison of the roles of youth and age should be read as poetry rather than analysis: "When we achieved and the new world dawned, the old men came out and took from us our victory, and remade it in the likeness of the former world they knew. Youth could win, but had not learned to keep, and was pitifully weak against age. We stammered that we had worked for a new heaven and a new earth, and they thanked us kindly and made their peace. When we are their age we shall no doubt serve our children so."

## CHAPTER 4

# THE WORLD-SLUMP AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

### *Collapse and recovery in the United States*

EMPHASIS has been laid repeatedly in the course of this survey on the claim that the peace-settlement was vitiated because the economic foundations on which it rested were not designed to support its weight. In a sense this is an over-simplification, as all generalizations to some extent must tend to be. Nationalist jealousies, nationalist grievances, the prestige-motive, fear—all these and other social-political influences—played their part in contributing to the eventual collapse. But, ultimately, they spell the failure of the League epoch to arrive at any scheme of international economic unity.

It is difficult, indeed, to see how any such unity could have been attained by a system of production whose incentive is that of private profit and therefore of relentless competition. The tendency of capitalism, it is true, has been to diminish the free competition which in its earlier stages had existed within the main industries. The smaller industrial units were crushed out in order to organise heavy industry under large companies, combines and monopolies. This reorganization brought industry into intimate economic association with the great consolidated financial interest of the banks. Financial and industrial capital were accordingly fused. The general effect of this development has not been to eliminate competition as a whole: on the contrary, it has projected the competitive struggle into the international field. The State becomes virtually an economic entity at war with other States. The need to increase profits and to invest profits inevitably leads the State to acquire either absolute imperial control or indirect political domination over the countries where it has invested its capital. If this extension of political sovereignty is not acquired the exported capital fails to be safeguarded. By the end of 1918, for example, the United States were exporting capital

mainly to South America and to Germany. But these countries did not become American possessions. The result of this failure to imperialise is significant. Because the United States had avoided imperialist acquisition Germany and many of the South American republics could default on their loans. The American investors lost almost all of their money.

Military war is the inevitable outcome of the economic rivalry of the Powers, and, radically, the impotence of the League of Nations is due to that fact. The attempt to build a structure of political international unity on a competitive economic foundation was doomed to failure in advance. But war is not only the outcome of a profit-economy: it also serves to aggravate the economic struggle. The levy of war-reparations on Germany and the burden of war-debts on the European belligerents generally meant that most of the debtor countries were living on borrowed money: between 1924 and 1928 Germany had borrowed £750,000,000 from foreign investors. The Young Plan had fixed the period of reparations-payment at fifty-nine years, but no remission of payment was allowed for in the event of a fall of world-prices. It is strange that this possibility was not taken into calculation, for 60 per cent. of the total gold supply was now deposited in Paris and New York, and the effect on prices was inevitable.

There seems to have been no sort of realization in America as to the coming debacle. The Americans, indeed, were conscious only of their apparent wealth as a great creditor-country. The sense of post-war prosperity had led to an amazing increase of American production. In 1929 the United States turned out fifty-five million tons of steel and five and a half million motor-cars. In 1928 Americans had sold abroad over eight hundred million dollars more goods than they had bought. In addition, two hundred million dollars were paid to them in that year by way of war-debt, and six hundred million dollars by way of interest from foreign investments. The foreign consumers and debtors were paying for this partly by the amounts which American tourists spent on their holiday excursions, partly from their own immigrants in America, and partly from the nine hundred and seventy million dollars which had been loaned to them in a single year. American

production was by now launched on so immense a scale that the home demand could only absorb a small proportion of the goods: American industry, that is to say, depended on the continued ability of the outside world to pay for its purchases. The United States did not require foreign goods: indeed, such goods were deliberately boycotted by a mounting tariff. Americans were speculating heavily as an expression of their mood of optimism. The demand for money with which to gamble, added to the fact that war-debts had to be paid in gold and not in goods, drew money from Europe to America, from where it was desperately needed to where it had become a superfluity. Prices began to fall to half the 1928 level, and with this fall came a reduction of purchasing power and an increasing inability of foreign countries to pay their debts.

The crash developed suddenly in October 1929. There was a brief recovery in November, followed by a further collapse and a spread of panic. The New York Exchange slumped, and investors lost most of the capital with which they had paid for their shares. The effect of this general collapse was more catastrophic than any other depression in capitalist history. In Great Britain alone, by January 1933, the number of unemployed workers had risen to 2,903,000, and in the United States to just over thirteen million. The total unemployment world-figure was certainly well over thirty million.

The story of American recovery is too involved to tell in any detail here. Franklin Roosevelt, Governor of New York State, was elected President by a Democratic majority of over seven million votes, in November 1932. In March 1933, he took drastic steps to deal with the critical situation. The banks were closed for a week in order to remove financial administration out of the hands of the individual States and place it under federal responsibility. In 1919 a wave of puritanic and ultra-nationalist revivalism had swept through America, resulting in a prohibition of all drinks containing more than 0.5 per cent. alcohol. This reaction had also been accompanied by the rise of such fascist societies as the Ku-Klux Klan in 1921, in anti-immigration regulations passed during the same years, as also in the outbreak of gang-terrorism and business-rackets. Roosevelt allowed the manufacture of beer containing up

to 3.2 per cent. alcohol. He appealed to the public to save democracy by putting their money back in the banks. An Emergency Relief Act, authorising the expenditure of five hundred million dollars was passed, and Roosevelt was able to offer forest-work to 250,000 unemployed. Two thousand million dollars was spent under the Agricultural Adjustment Act to save the mortgaged farms. Large local reclamation works were set in hand, such as the development of the Tennessee Valley. The 'New Deal,' as it came to be called, was concerned with financial as well as with industrial and agricultural policy, and it attempted not only to achieve economic recovery and relief of poverty but to bring about an actual reform of the economic system. The National Industrial Recovery Act included measures to introduce better conditions of labour, to encourage collective bargaining and to restrict the evils of juvenile employment. On the other hand, the Agricultural Adjustment Act aimed at raising prices largely by the expedient of restricting production, so that, although the farmer benefited, he had to pay more for his own purchases.

The United States had evolved a strange mixture of liberal democratic ideas within a plutocracy of rigid and even brutal big business vested interests. Readers of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* are given a generally accurate picture of the inhumanity of this big business control. The American tradition had been largely based on the theory that any man who was out of work was responsible for his own misfortunes. Consequently, there was little machinery in existence for dealing with social hardship, and the trade-union movement was itself much less developed than in Europe. The financial and trust interests soon became suspicious of the President's intentions and were fortified by a decision by the Supreme Court in May 1935 that N.I.R.A. was unconstitutional. Nevertheless, the President was able to secure re-election in November 1936, and thereupon to request Congress to reform the Court. His policy was certainly not of a socialist character. In the reduction of the salaries of federal servants and Congressmen, and of the bonuses due to ex-Service men, as well as in his treatment of the banks, he was pursuing the orthodox path of retrenchment and a balanced budget. His public-work policy and relief expenditure, however, was, in effect,

inflation. In January 1934, he devalued the dollar to nearly 60 per cent. of its former rate. The Economic Conference, which sat in London in 1933 to re-establish stability among the five 'gold-bloc' nations, indeed received its death blow on July 3, when the President refused to agree even to general co-operation in this task, on the ground that the decline of the dollar-value was essential to American recovery. This action is curiously reminiscent of the American repudiation of the League of Nations, for it illustrates the reluctance of the United States to abandon isolation in spite of the inevitable and increasingly intimate relationship of America with the rest of the world. The results of this second refusal to co-operate with Europe were no less far-reaching than the self-exclusion of America from the League.

As a whole America recovered because her own capital potentialities constituted a vast reserve on which she could effectively draw in her hour of trial: but the dynamic energy and strong will of her President also played a vital part. Roosevelt was faced with a crucial emergency, and a lesser man must have succumbed. The reality of this emergency must be reckoned in any criticism of Roosevelt's economic policy. He had little time in which to act when he first took office. He resorted, therefore, to a number of expedients, some of which he knew must fail. The expedients in a few cases were even contradictory. He relied largely on high wages to increase purchasing-power, but this necessarily raised the cost of living and neutralised the increased pay. The deliberate plan of launching State schemes of development at the very moment of a depression, which, incidentally, had long ago been advocated by the Liberals in Britain, justified itself. But the fact that even this non-revolutionary measure aroused the opposition of the financial interests is a sign of the obstruction which any attempt radically to improve social and economic conditions will have to combat, particularly under the influence of a slump; an obstruction which is not necessarily due to any malicious personal intent on the part of individual magnates but is created by the sheer pressure of the existing competitive system.

*Effect of the slump in Great Britain*

In Great Britain the immediate political effect of the slump was to overthrow the Labour Government. Labour had been returned for a second time in 1929, on this occasion winning 287 seats against the Conservative total of 260. Mr Baldwin had lost his majority by appealing to the country on the inappropriate slogan of 'Safety First.' The Liberals held 59 seats, so that Labour was once again compelled to rely on Liberal support, and could not, therefore, embark on any socialist programme. There had been a slight boom before the slump owing to the rise of new light industries, such as wireless and gramophone production, as well as speculation in 'dirt-track' shares. The City was fairly prosperous. But unemployment was still rife. A quarter of a million miners were idle, and the same percentage of workless had been reached in the engineering trades. The new Government had to find money to save the unemployed from starvation, to meet the huge war debt due to the United States, and to pay 5 per cent. interest to holders of the £2,000,000,000 war loan. Trade with the Soviet Union which would have largely relieved the problem was prohibited virtually by political prejudice, and the task of averting the crisis was thus rendered even more difficult. The desperate condition of Germany and Austria compelled Britain to advance them more money, but by now America was calling in her short-term loans. In July 1931, Britain was compelled to borrow £50,000,000 from New York and Paris, but by the end of the month even that sum was rapidly disappearing. In every country there was a danger of a run on the banks, and consequently there was a further withdrawal of reserves from Britain. In August the Bank of England urged the Government to borrow £80,000,000 more in order to maintain the gold standard. The American Bankers appeared to be unwilling to make this loan unless Britain balanced her budget. Mr Hoover, the American President, had proposed a twelve-months' moratorium of the war-debts, and France, after too long a hesitation, had agreed. The effect of the moratorium on Britain, however, was to deprive her of £11,000,000 of reparation payment.



On July 14 the Macmillan Report emphasised the grave danger of borrowing for short and lending for long terms. The Committee on National Expenditure recommended that £96,000,000 should be saved, largely by wage-reduction and by a heavy cut in unemployment benefit. The Labour Government was accordingly faced with a critical issue. Either it must penalise the vast body of unemployed or forego the American loan. There was no Roosevelt in Britain to cope with the situation. Public opinion gave way to panic, and, illogically enough, blamed the Labour Government for the world-depression. Ramsay MacDonald capitulated and agreed to form a 'National' Government. At all costs, the Conservatives—including MacDonald—declared, the gold standard must be maintained. On September 21 an Act was rushed through which relieved the Bank of England of the obligation to give gold in exchange for notes. Britain was off the gold-standard. The new Government had itself carried out the very policy which it had declared to be disastrous.

In October the Government went to the country. The result was an overwhelming Conservative victory, for the 'Nationalists' were almost entirely Conservative in composition and fully Conservative in their aims. Labour lost no less than 213 seats, and the Government was supported by 91 per cent. of the House. The Government policy of recovery may be classified under four heads. An equalization fund was launched to prevent the fluctuation of the pound: the interest on the war loan was reduced to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., thus hitting the rentiers, but encouraging them to invest in industrials: the Scandinavian and East Baltic customers of Britain were told that they must purchase a given proportion of British goods if they were to continue to receive British orders: and a series of Marketing Acts were passed, which aimed at controlling prices and restricting production. In July 1932, the Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa decided to increase duties on foreign goods and thus to fall in line with the tendency, already precipitated in the rest of the capitalist world, of cutting down international trade and following the path of 'economic nationalism': the Dominions, however, refused to lower their tariffs, and the British Commonwealth revealed an unmistakable lack of economic unity even in a time of

severe crisis. In 1934 the Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to pay the bulk of the American debt.

Newfoundland was so affected by the fall of world-prices that she was threatened with actual bankruptcy. One or two paper mills had been started of recent years, and she dreamed of becoming a tourist-centre for the Empire. But her public debt by 1930 had increased to three times its normal amount.

The Conservative policy was thus directed on orthodox capitalist lines. Ultimately, therefore, its effect was to economise and thus to place by far the heaviest burden on the poor, and particularly on the unemployed. The wages of civil service employees, teachers, police, soldiers and sailors, were heavily reduced, the reductions amounting in the case of naval ratings below warrant-officer rank to 25 per cent. of their pay. Trouble broke out in the Navy on September 15, 1931, at Invergordon. Twelve thousand sailors held mass meetings, refusing to obey orders and rejoin their ships. "The men are quite willing" declared their manifesto, forwarded to the Admiralty, "to accept a cut which they . . . think within reason, and unless this is done we must remain as one unit, refusing to serve under the new rates of pay." On December 9, over twelve thousand police attended a meeting in the Albert Hall in order to express a similar protest. Dissatisfaction throughout the country was evidenced by demonstrations. Fifty thousand unemployed, for example, marched through Glasgow, and there was a serious clash with the police.

The Government's case rested on the plea that in a time of acute economic depression all classes must share in the sacrifice. The weakness of this argument is that the poor are actually asked to suffer much more heavily than the rich. To reduce the salary of a man, who is earning, £2,000 to £1,600 involves very minor readjustments in his standard of living: to reduce a wage of £150 to £120 may involve desperate privation. The Committee on National Expenditure actually recommended a cut in the pay of the poorest class of all—the unemployed. The Government did not adopt the drastic reductions proposed, but limited the cut to 10 per cent. By an Order in Council passed on November 12, 852,000 claimants were subjected to the Family Means Test. This Test, as set out in the 1934

Unemployment Insurance Act, was a family assessment. The incomes of all members of a family were reckoned, and the amount by which that total exceeded the current relief scales was deducted from the pay due to the unemployed members, widows' pensions, old age pensions and trade union benefits, superannuation pay being also taken into account. Under the original Means Test a son, earning 31s. a week, with an unemployed father, would have had to support the whole family: the father could receive no unemployment benefit. An unemployed man living with aged parents in receipt each of a 10s. per week pension, and the male parent with a superannuation pension of 10s. per week, could receive no benefit: the 30s. a week must support the entire family. But far more deplorable than the financial burden was the system of inquisition which the Means Test introduced. The claimant was forced to appear before committees and undergo cross-examination as to his daily activities; Means Test officers spied on the privacy of his home and had the right to subject any member of the family to rigorous questioning. The existence of small savings in the Post Office had to be divulged by the claimant under penalty of prosecution. Officers even entered the houses of claimants and urged them to sell articles of furniture.

Further disorders developed in various parts of the country, and the Government took steps to forbid all demonstrations of the unemployed. Serious disturbances broke out in Birkenhead in September 1932, with the result that the Public Assistance Committee raised the weekly relief scales from 12s. to 15s. 3d. for men and 10s. to 13s. 6d. for women. Demonstrations also occurred at West Ham and at Liverpool, where 20,000 unemployed marched through the streets. North Shields, Belfast and Croydon were scenes of similar disorders—in Belfast the military were called out and there were several casualties. On October 18 a Hunger March converged on London, and there were police charges in Hyde Park, complaints being subsequently made from many quarters that the police had behaved with unnecessary ferocity. Throughout this and the following years demonstrations continued, some of them of an ingenuous character and evidently directed by the Communists. On the afternoon of a day shortly before

Christmas two hundred unemployed lay down in the roadway of Oxford Street and held up the traffic, displaying large posters, until they were removed by the police. There had also been an invasion of the Ritz, a surprise march into the private grounds of Holyrood Palace and the unloading of a sham 'coffin' at the Prime Minister's house. This campaign was not without its effect in bringing home to the general public the fact that, while sacrifices demanded of the well-to-do made little inroad on their enjoyment of normal luxuries, there were by January 1933 no less than 2,903,000 registered unemployed, and, if the unregistered are included, rather more than three and a half million.

The Government was by now seriously alarmed. Ramsay MacDonald, whose utterances as Prime Minister were becoming peculiarly difficult to decipher, declared on November 22, 1932, that "the Government is the first to face the actual problem." In the following February, however, he announced in a letter to the Bethnal Green Borough Council that the Government "had reached a definite decision to discontinue the policy of attempting to deal with unemployment by a system of State-aided relief works," thus abandoning the schemes which he had drawn up when leader of the Labour Party. How was the problem, then, to be tackled? One of the most disturbing features of the situation was that reports from scientific investigators, such as Sir John Orr, as well as from social workers and clergymen, were arriving from all parts of the country, testifying to the widespread malnutrition among children and the general lowering of the standard of living in the homes of the unemployed. Sir John Orr, in a book published in 1936,<sup>1</sup> divided the population into six groups, the first three groups consisting of those whose expenditure on food was totally or partially inadequate for normal health. The startling conclusion reached was that no less than 50 per cent. of the nation, or five million families, belonged to these groups: 10 per cent., or 4,500,000 persons, were living on totally inadequate food. The British Medical Association made similar investigations.

The Government's Bill was introduced in November 1933. Its reception was not improved by the statement of Sir Henry Betterton, Minister of Labour, that the Government's

<sup>1</sup> *Food, Health and Income.*

cuts in unemployment benefit and the application of the Means Test, had effected a saving of £54,500,000 : in this connexion it may not be altogether irrelevant to note that Sir Henry's own salary, on his appointment as chairman of the Unemployment Assistance Board, was raised from £2,000 to £5,000 per annum. The new scale of benefit was a reduction for all claimants except for boys and girls between 16 and 17 : a male adult, for example, living with his family, was to have his pay reduced from 17s. to 10s. a week. It was estimated that one and a half million workers would come within the scope of these regulations, and that, taking into calculation the relatives living in the same home who were affected, there would be four million victims. Fresh protests broke out, and, in spite of the Government's repeated declarations that it would vigorously suppress demonstrations by the unemployed and refuse to receive deputations, Mr Ernest Brown, the new Minister of Labour, received the delegates of a hunger march on November 12, 1936. The conscience of the public was at last aroused and a storm of indignation against the Government proposals swept through all classes of the community. Mr G. K. Chesterton voiced the general opinion in characteristically vigorous terms. "For the first time within mortal memory," he declared, "the Government and the nation has set out on a definite, deliberate campaign to make the poor poorer. . . . People who are already clinging with their teeth and finger-nails to the edge of the chasm are to be formally and legally kicked into the chasm." On July 10, 1936, the Government, as a result of a pledge given at the general election in November 1935, announced a revised scale in which a few of the heavier reductions were mitigated.

The figures of unemployment fell from 1936 onwards, partly as a result of trade recovery, but mainly on account of armament revival. The problem had become less acute only because it had now become necessary to prepare for war.

### *Unsettlement in France*

The political effect of the economic unsettlement in France was also considerable. France, as we have already seen, had failed to obtain the full measure of guarantee which she considered necessary for her own security. The

slump aggravated her difficulties. Her first attempts were to stand with Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, and to cling to gold parity. She had had experience in the immediate post-war years of the results of uncontrolled devaluation. But the disadvantages of adhering to gold soon became apparent. While the 'sterling bloc' countries could show some improvement in industrial production the 'gold group' was heavily handicapped in international trade by its over-valued currency. Moreover, France's relations with the very Governments to whom she looked for support, were at this moment somewhat strained. Philip Snowden's protests at the Hague, in August 1929, against the unfair deal which he considered that Britain was being offered in respect to reparation-annuities, had been applauded by the whole British nation: as France was the country which was to receive five-sixths of the 'unconditional' annuities—annuities which were virtually first-class debentures, whereas, as Mr Snowden put it, Britain had to be content with "ordinary shares of perhaps a not very sound concern"—it was mainly against her that the protests of the Labour Government were directed. After the American presidential election, in November 1932, Britain and France both applied for a suspension of payment of their war-debts, but the United States Government refused. Britain paid the whole of her current instalment in gold, with the proviso that she would regard this as a capital payment: and, in order to regularise the situation she made no further demand on her own debtors. France, however, was not in a position to follow this course and defaulted completely.

By 1934 the French political situation had become critical. Alexandre Stavisky, who had forged municipal bonds at Bayonne, was said by the police to have committed suicide; but several of the national newspapers hinted that he had been murdered because he knew too much. Chiappe, the Prefect of Police, and Bonnet, besides a number of deputies, judges and editors, were supposed to be implicated in the scandal. The Right seized the opportunity which these suspicions offered by agitating for an authoritarian Government, which meant, in effect, the overthrow of the Republic and the inauguration of an openly fascist regime.

There is probably no modern State whose political

conditions have been more difficult for the foreigner to understand than those of France. The French system is highly involved as a result of the large number of political groups and the multitude of minor statesmen who have gained more prominence as leaders of these groups than they would otherwise have achieved. The main feature of the French order which has to be appreciated before French political history can be understood is that although the constitution was theoretically democratic the real sovereign power was vested in the Bank of France. The policy of the 'High Bank' or 'new Bastille,' as it was sometimes termed, was directed by the governor, two vice-governors and fifteen 'regents.' These regents represented big industry and finance, and their power was virtually hereditary. The circle was exclusive and its outlook entirely reactionary.

A network of influence spread out from this caucus embracing the Foreign Office and Finance Ministry, diplomacy, journalism and the Church. The 'regency' could overthrow any Government at its pleasure simply by threatening to refuse the necessary credits. This enormous concentration of power in the hands of a small plutocratic bloc meant that the fate of France lay in the hands of the Bank and of the 'two hundred families' which controlled it. This caucus had always been a bulwark of the Right. But from 1933 onwards the outlook of the French Right had undergone a radical transformation. Hitherto it had been rigidly pro-Nationalist and loyal to the Poincaré doctrine: now it had veered round to a pro-Fascist attitude, as a result of its deep-seated fear of Communism. Barthou, who had lost his life in October 1934, at Marseilles, in attempting to shield King Alexander of Yugoslavia from the assassination perpetrated by Croatian terrorists, may be said to have been the last survivor of traditional French conservatism. The new Right looked with friendly eyes towards Mussolini's Italy and even towards Hitler. Already, many of the Right politicians were said to be involved in pro-German intrigues. Even if we are not prepared to accuse Flandin, Pétain, Weygand or Bonnet of deliberately treasonable, defeatist motives, there is no doubt that they belonged to a school of thought which had persuaded itself that the vital need, outweighing all other considerations, was to protect French proprietary class-rights against Red revolution.

This development is of great significance, for it shows that world-politics were tending to pass out of the nationalist phase into a direct conflict between the causes which may be roughly identified with the labels Right and Left, and which cut through all national boundaries. Much as English statesmen might wish to avoid a grouping of ideologies the divisions in French thought were already sorting themselves on extra-national lines. The Right sought alliance with the vested interests of foreign Powers rather than French security: or, rather, they believed that French security could be preserved by setting up a Fascist regime and relying on German and Italian support for its maintenance. Both the financial, industrial and the Catholic elements visualised a Latin bloc which, far from being antagonistic to, would be animated by the same anti-Communist aims as the Nazis professed. This course involved counter-revolution, for the world had by now entered a revolutionary period of history, a period in which the existing social and economic order could only be retained by Fascist means. The trend of the new French Right, with its desire to seek co-operation with Hitler, was the first symptom of a disease of corruption which was to eat into the very heart of France. It was not the revolutionary Communist but the aristocratic Right which was destined to defeat France and to deliver her body and soul into the hands of her avowed enemies.

To the extreme wing of the Right were attached forces of a much less reputable and indeed wholly terrorist character. The *Croix de Feu* was an aggressive Fascist organization, armed with rifles, machine-guns, and a few aeroplanes. The *Action Francaise* was a Royalist paper, owned by Maurras and Daudet, whose programme was hardly less violent. The *Cagouleurs*, who were undoubtedly financed from German and Italian sources, were responsible for various outrages, the most notorious of which was the bomb explosion at the Federation of Industries, which succeeded in killing two workmen. Carlo Rosselli and his brother, prominent enemies of Mussolini, were murdered on French soil, probably by the same agencies. On the night of February 6, 1934, serious riots broke out in Paris which, though instigated by these factions, were interpreted in the French reactionary press as Communist disorders



and led to a recall to the premiership of the aged Doumergue and the establishment of an authoritarian ministry.

The French Left was a strong electoral force—the Communists formed a larger party than in any other European country outside Russia—but it was divided. The Communists regarded the Socialists, led by Léon Blum, as a hopelessly bourgeois body and fought them actively, even at the cost of losing seats to the reactionaries. The Communists were intensely aware of the Fascist danger, and became, indeed, associated in the French mind with an ultra-aggressive anti-Nazi policy. They were accused of trying to force France into war with Germany.

In 1934 the Soviet Union adopted a new attitude to the capitalist Powers. In view of the Fascist peril and the threat to its own interests, it decided to seek admission to the League of Nations and to co-operate freely with the liberal democracies. This entailed an entire *volte-face* on the part of the Communists in every country. They were instructed to work for a Popular Front not only with the Socialists, whom they had hitherto denounced, but also with the Liberals. The French Communists even attempted to woo Catholic interests, though without success.

In the international field this change of tactics was obviously genuine and reasonable, and Hitler's reaction was to denounce Russia as the source of all evils. In the sphere of domestic politics, however, it invited inconsistencies which were serious enough in Britain to wreck the Popular Front scheme. The Labour Party were able to oppose the movement on the ground that alliance with the Liberals would involve at least a temporary compromise over socialism, although Labour itself had been willing twice to compromise on this issue when it took office under Liberal sanction. Moreover, many Englishmen who were sympathetic to the idea of forming a consolidated progressive front hesitated to give the proposal their support, since they doubted the wisdom of co-operating with a party which had hitherto vilified in uncompromising terms all who failed to accept the full orthodox Marxist creed. Moreover, it seemed strange to many Englishmen that the Communists should now be declaring that democracy was a cause so sacred that all previous differences must be forgotten in order to rally to its defence, when the home of

the Communist Party was conducted under a system which few were ready to describe as politically democratic.

In France, however, these doubts were not sufficient to prevent the Popular Front experiment from coming into operation. The majority of the French people had begun to awaken to the peril of the Fascist threat, represented both by the criminal terrorism of the avowedly Fascist organizations and the sinister and underground intrigues of the autocrats of high finance. On July 15, 1934, at a mass-demonstration in Paris, an oath was taken to unite in defending Republican liberties. At the 1936 elections, Socialists, Radicals and Communists agreed not to oppose one another in the second ballot, and, as a result, a Popular Front Government was elected, with Blum as premier.

Blum at once endeavoured to apply a policy of social reform, and was accordingly opposed from the first by the powerful vested interests. The measures which he introduced could by no stretch of the imagination be described as socialist or revolutionary, since they made no attempt to dethrone the system of private ownership. But they were sufficiently progressive to alarm the ruling financiers and industrialists, and the same methods of obstruction which had defeated the Cartel des Gauches were immediately adopted. A flight of capital abroad commenced and a demand was launched for a further devaluation of the franc. The Communists threatened to vote against Blum if he yielded on this issue, for they saw that devaluation would result in a rise in the cost of living and increased hardship for the workers. The social reforms which Blum was introducing lent themselves easily to the objection that they involved increased expenditure and therefore injury to French foreign trade. The attempt to block the measures which Blum was endeavouring to introduce produced widespread strikes. The application of the forty-hour week measure, moreover, brought the aeroplane industry to a complete standstill for nearly a month. There could, indeed, have been no more unfortunate moment for the introduction of this reform-policy. While the French workers were enjoying their reduction of hours and touring the countryside with their families, on holidays with pay, the German workmen across the frontier were being dragooned to work ten hours a day in the grim task of active war-preparation.

Blum was compelled in September 1936 to agree to devaluation, and the Communists, rather than risk the defeat of the Popular Front, withdrew their opposition. The franc fell by over 25 per cent. A joint declaration by France, Britain and the United States announced the determination of these countries to establish a permanent equilibrium between their currencies. The whole weight of the Bank of France and the interests it controlled were brought meanwhile to bear in order to defeat the Popular Front movement. The method was simple enough: the financial magnates by creating credit-panic could show that these reformist measures were driving France headlong towards bankruptcy. Simultaneously with this conspiracy the fascist underworld launched its campaign of terrorism. Riots broke out in Clichy, and a large-scale plot was discovered, involving the importation of rifles and ammunition from Italy. The Right thereupon protested that only a rigorous dictatorship could prevent these outrages. Blum was defeated, and eventually Daladier took his place. The Popular Front rapidly disintegrated.

The moral of this failure is the inevitable opposition which any serious effort to ameliorate social conditions encounters from industrial and financial magnates in a time of financial depression. Even in America, where the liberal remedies of President Roosevelt were largely successful, the resistance of big business was immediately provoked and some of the major schemes of social amelioration had to be abandoned. In France, where there were no corresponding abundance of capital resources, the obstruction to a progressive social programme was more complete. This process was inevitable. Within an economy of production for profit the industrial owners can hardly afford to allow an improvement of working-class conditions to mature. The system could only permit this development if the fundamental objective of production was the satisfaction of the needs of all social consumers. The French financiers became alarmed by the trend of the Blum policy, and the mere withdrawal of their confidence was sufficient to weaken the Government's programme and to frustrate its aims. In the last resort the price which this obstruction has to pay is the curtailment of political democratic rights: political democracy is, in fact, imperilled whenever the effort to

achieve social progress is deliberately thwarted. But the full consequences of this development, the actual collapse of French democracy, was not to materialise until a later stage of the story.

### *The Rise of the Nazis*

The effect of the slump on Germany was to press events much more rapidly towards the overthrow of the Weimar Republic and the substitution of an aggressive war-policy.

German industry during the twenties had been recovering with remarkable speed. By 1926 her industrial output was only 5 per cent. below that of pre-war years. But the capital expenditure which this recovery involved was met largely by loans: the loans from abroad which Germany received in 1927 and 1928 were five times greater than the amount of reparations due to be repaid during that period. Dr Rathenau, who had served Stresemann faithfully in the policy of meeting the Allied claims, found himself perpetually frustrated by Poincaré. The French policy, as we have seen, weakened the status of the Weimar Republic and played into the hands of Hugo Stinnes and the forces behind Stinnes—forces which regarded a repudiation of Versailles and all its works as the proper path for Germany to follow. When the storm of the depression first struck Germany, and the policy of short-term borrowing was no longer possible, Germany's accumulated deficit exceeded 1,200,000,000 marks. Dr Brüning, who became Chancellor in 1930, tried vainly to avert the crash. His proposal to form a customs union with Austria was defeated, as we have seen, partly by the Austrian collapse but largely by the action of France. As Mr R. T. Clark remarks,<sup>1</sup> Germany's "impotence to conduct even the shadow of an independent foreign policy, was exposed to the world."

In July 1931, the famous Darmstadter Bank failed, and other banks were compelled to close for two days. The political result of this financial crisis and of the drastic measures which the German Government was compelled to employ in order to meet it was far-reaching. The brutal fact which seemed to the German people to be proved beyond dispute was that the policy of fulfilment, for which

<sup>1</sup> *The Fall of the German Republic.*

Stresemann and Rathenau and the Weimar Republic itself had stood, had only led to this further and more complete financial disaster. Most young Germans were now faced with a situation in which all prospects of stable employment had vanished: they were disillusioned, despairing and ready to embrace any cause which would offer them relief. The majority of the German people, old as well as young, were driven by the course of events to associate the Republic with financial ruin and national humiliation. The Communists were bitterly anti-Republican, for they remembered how ruthlessly the attempts at revolution had been suppressed by the Republican Government, which had been willing to call out the reactionary ex-army elements for that purpose. The Right, the army, the nationalists, the big industrial interests were equally hostile: the Weimar road meant, in their view, a permanent degradation of Germany, whereas, at all costs, she must win back her pre-war status. The Catholic and Lutheran standpoints were critical from another angle. The liberalism of Weimar had opened the door to sexual liberties, particularly in the Youth Movement, while Berlin had become notorious for the prevalence of its homosexual resorts: these features of German life were interpreted as symptoms of national decadence. The stage was set for a movement which would reverse these conditions and would offer what to the puritanic and militarist elements appeared to be the one means of restoring German virility.

Hitler's original programme was accordingly at once an appeal to many different sections of society. It was essentially an anti-Jew, anti-profitier, anti-Versailles, anti-Weimar programme. Hitler appealed to the shopkeeper class as a champion against Jewish profiteering and against the big trusts which threatened small business: to the industrialist lords he stood as a bulwark against Communist revolution: to the junkers and nationalists he offered the hope of rescuing Germany from her subservience to the Allies: to German youth he held out the promise both of employment and of a positive mission to fill the dull void in their lives: to the Churchmen his movement seemed to be the sign of healthy revival along the well-tried German road of militarist discipline and patriotic fervour.

After some fluctuating fortunes the Nazis won 107 seats

in the Reichstag at the September 1930 elections, with a total vote of six and a half million. Brüning had antagonised the middle-classes by his policy of heavy taxation. The aged President, Field-Marshal Hindenburg, turned to Herr von Papen as Brüning's successor, and the 'Barons' Cabinet' was formed in June 1932. Germany's claim to rearmament up to the Allied level grew more insistent under the new Government, and it was evident that the Rathenau policy was already dead. At Lausanne von Papen won his laurels, inasmuch as at that conference reparations were virtually cancelled: Germany was to settle her final obligations by delivering to the Bank for International Settlements 5 per cent. redeemable bonds with 1 per cent. sinking fund to the value of £150,000,000. But the Nazi Party was already committed to a much more defiant policy, and their political strength had increased to 230 seats, with a vote of nearly 14 million. The President offered Hitler a seat in the Cabinet; but Hitler revealed for the first time that remarkable intuitive capacity of knowing when to take risks, by refusing the offer. Papen thereupon decided to meet the Nazi threat by forming a Nationalist dictatorship and thus stealing the Nazi thunder. Press censorship was introduced, many Communists were imprisoned, and Jews were dismissed from public offices.

These tactics were at first successful. The Nazi vote at the November elections dropped by two million. Von Papen now attempted a more daring manœuvre. Hitler was offered the Chancellorship, and on January 30, 1933, he took office. Von Papen reckoned that by entrusting him with formal power, while actually making him dependent on a coalition with the Nationalists, Hitler would be compelled to run in harness. Papen reckoned, however, without his man. Hitler, having at last achieved power, was not ready to be satisfied with a merely nominal authority. The new elections were fixed for March 5, 1933, and already there were rumours afoot that something was going to happen which would have considerable political importance. This event took place on the night of February 27. The Reichstag was burnt down.

The actual perpetrator of the crime was a semi-imbecile Dutchman, who admitted that he had some associations with Communism. What is more significant, however, is

the fact that by 2 a.m.—so soon after the outbreak of the fire that the document must have already been drafted—the printed form of a special edict against the Communists was already being issued.<sup>1</sup> Everything had been prepared. Without a moment's delay not only the Communist but the Social Democrat deputies of the Reichstag were arrested wholesale: 1,500 of them were rounded up before dawn, including Thaelmann and Torgler, the two Communist leaders. There is, indeed, no longer the slightest doubt that the fire was arranged and perpetrated by the Nazis themselves. The only unguarded entrance to the Reichstag was a tunnel under the street, at one end of which was Goering's own house. At least ten men must have carried in the inflammable material and set it alight, and no group of Communists could have entered or left that way without being discovered. The Nazi case was so clumsy that at the subsequent trial no charge could be substantiated against Thaelmann or Torgler, and, on one occasion at least, the imbecile Van der Lubbe woke to sanity and gave the game away. Dr Ernst Oberfohren, leader of the Nationalists, made his own careful investigations and prepared a confidential memorandum: on May 7, he was discovered dead in his Berlin flat, and though it was said he had committed suicide, there is little question that he was murdered by the Nazis. Dr Georg Bell, an ex-Nazi, who had talked openly to his friends about his knowledge of the conspiracy, fled to Austria and was shot in his hotel by Nazi storm-troopers.

No political movement has ever come into power by more criminal means. The means were not those of open revolutionary violence but the terrorism of underhand murders and unscrupulous deceit. The subsequent elections, nevertheless, were insufficiently favourable to the Nazis: they won 288 seats, and the Nationalists 52, out of a total of 647, so that together they only mustered a coalition majority of 33. A further step was necessary if the Nazis were to obtain the full power that they coveted. On March 23, therefore, an Enabling Bill was passed, granting dictatorial power to the Nazi leader for a period of four years, on the plea that the Reichstag outrage revealed the need for drastic measures to prevent a revolutionary outbreak. By this stroke parliamentary government was

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Wheeler-Bennett *The New Regime in Germany*, in *International Affairs* (1933).

permanently abolished. The trade unions were dissolved, Papen was sent off to the Vatican to arrange a concordat with the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church was ordered not to preach against 'National Socialism'—as the Nazi creed was called, the Left parties were suppressed, the Centre and other opposition groups rendered impotent. By July 11 the Nazis were in supreme control.

It is important to bear these particular facts in mind since it is often claimed that the Nazis came into power by constitutional means, as representatives of the expressed will of the vast majority of the German people. It is true, as has been shown, that the strength of National Socialism had increased rapidly during this period and that, as a result, the Nazi leader acquired the Chancellorship. It is true also that the Reichstag fire was a successful coup which alarmed the nation and led them to acquiesce in dictatorship methods to meet an apparent emergency. It is not true, however, that the permanent overthrow of parliamentary government and the seizure of power by the Nazis was a constitutional procedure. The violent suppression of all the anti-Nazi groups had no constitutional sanction and occurred only because the Nazis had made effectual use of the powers with which they had been temporarily entrusted to entrench themselves permanently in office. At the peak of their electoral success the Nazis represented no more than a formidable minority of the electors. Their subsequent autonomy was due simply to the violent and savage liquidation of the opposition elements and the inability of those elements to mobilise a resistance in time.

It is also true that National Socialism possessed no originality of ideas. Indeed, the main strength of its appeal to Germans depended on its adherence to conventional German principles, the principles which had actuated German nationalism at least since the days of Bismarck. Even the mythical ideology of the sacredness and superior vitality of Nordic blood was no Nazi creation. National Socialism was primarily a reversion to primitive racial conceptions, to the romanticism of military heroics and physical force, and consequently to masculine rule. The status of women in Germany at once began to decline. "Go back to your homes" Dr Goebbels exhorted the female employees in Government offices. "Bear children,



revive the ancient virtues of German womanhood. Find happiness in the love of a truly German man." Pacifist and internationalist ideals which had begun to flourish under the Weimar regime were now denounced as the weakening and insidious poison of Jewish influence. German youth no longer sallied forth in expeditions to the German countryside to discover the 'natural' life, but marched in Nazi military formations, clicked heels and gave the Hitler salute. It was the old German militarism which had returned in an accentuated form and which was fastened to a more stringent doctrine of the subservience of individual freedom to the dominance of the mystical German State.

In this chapter we have been concerned with the effect of the financial collapse of the international economic system, and it is in that context that the rise of National Socialism should be reckoned. Political factors, such as the general resentment of the German people against the terms of the Versailles Treaty and the refusal of the Allies to permit an equalization of German armaments with their own armament standard were no more than contributory influences. For ten years before the Nazi Party became all-powerful the political attitude of the Powers towards Germany, as witnessed by her admission to the League of Nations, had steadily improved. The crisis which gave the Nazis their opportunity was directly produced by the slump and the inability of the Allies to save Germany from financial ruin. The Nazis were able therefore to appeal to the German people by pointing to the chaotic economic failure of the policy of fulfilment. Whatever were now the motives of her former enemies, the depressing and inescapable reality was that the Allies, themselves in severe financial straits, were no longer able to assist in averting a German economic disaster. Versailles had led to this in actuality, even though the conscience of the Allies had by now become converted to the view that Germany ought to be reinstated as a world-Power.

There was at first considerable uncertainty in foreign circles, outside France, as to the nature of the Nazi dictatorship and the effect which it was likely to have upon international relations. The general view in British diplomatic circles seems to have been that the Nazi coup represented a domestic political incident, and that Hitler would not

survive for any considerable time. The nature of Nazism was not, however, to be left long in doubt. It was evident that, although the Party was united as regards its aims in the field of foreign policy, in domestic affairs there was a considerable cleavage. Captain Röhm, who with his private *Sturm Abteilungen* (S.A.) army, had been largely responsible in the early days for establishing Nazi dominance, represented the Left wing aspirations of the Party. Hitler was now, however, obtaining support from the big industrialists, and was anxious not to emphasise the socialist features of his programme. Moreover, now that Nazism was in power, the Brown-Shirt S.A. troops were little needed. Röhm was guilty, according to the official account, of having entered into a plot with General von Schleicher to revolt against Hitler and to overthrow the regime by force in order to carry out a Socialist party. The accuracy of this charge may be judged by the fact that at the moment when the rising is alleged to have been timed (June 30, 1934), the Brown Shirts had been ordered a month's holiday for July and were already demobilised, while Röhm and a few other S.A. leaders were staying at a villa some distance from Munich, Karl Ernst—the leader of the S.A. in Berlin—was starting on a honeymoon trip to Majorca, and General von Schleicher was living quietly with his wife in a house twenty miles outside Berlin. Hitler and Dr Goebbels left Bonn at 2 a.m. on that eventful night and flew by aeroplane to Munich. Here they found a body of police awaiting them and drove with them by car to Röhm's villa. Röhm was arrested in bed and immediately shot with his companions. Goering acted similarly in Berlin. Ernst was shot as he was starting on his journey, and General von Schleicher and his wife were murdered in their house. Not one of the victims was put on trial. Indeed, Hitler openly boasted of the absence of trial. "In those twenty-four hours I was the supreme court of the nation," he said, "in my own person." "If three traitors in Germany have a meeting with a foreign statesman," he declared, "which they conceal from me, then I have such men shot, even if it be true that they only talked of the weather, old coins, and so on."

One of the most repulsive features of this crime was that Hitler subsequently attempted to justify it on moral grounds,

by disparaging the character of Röhm, the man who had been his most loyal supporter and who had probably been of more assistance to Hitler than any of his other followers. Röhm was known by Hitler, as indeed by most Germans, to have indulged for many years past in homosexual practices. His services had not been refused, however, on that score, any more indeed than was the case with other Nazi members who were similarly addicted. When Hitler attempted to justify the murder partly on these moral grounds there was an obvious hypocrisy in the indictment, a meanness which, far from exonerating, accentuated the loathsome character of the murder.

Stories of barbarous cruelty inflicted by the Nazis on the poorer Jews, and of horrors perpetrated in the concentration camps, in which Communists, Pacifists, Jews and other sections of German society were confined, had already begun to percolate through to the outside world. As yet, however, these accounts were received with some scepticism : they seemed to be as incredible or exaggerated as the usual atrocity-charges. The June 'purge,' however, unmasked the nature of the new regime in unmistakable colours. The facts were beyond dispute. The event was an unpleasant revelation of the mind of the leaders who were now in charge of German destinies. Men who had no hesitation in killing in cold blood and without trial those whom they considered to be their enemies in the domestic sphere would not be likely to refrain from such action in the international realm. The Germany of Hitler was evidently a very different entity from the Germany of Weimar. European peace was now menaced not only by the forces of economic and political disintegration but by a German dictator, whose methods and outlook seemed to be little removed from that of the gangster. The June purge was the first warning. A new and darker period of world-history had commenced.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHALLENGE TO THE LEAGUE

#### *Japanese Invasion of Manchuria*

It was not, however, in Europe that the first serious challenge to the peace-settlement of 1919 was to be launched. The scene of the outbreak of the world-struggle was the soil of Eastern Asia, and it is therefore necessary to take a general survey of the conditions which had recently arisen in China and Japan, the two countries which were concerned in this opening phase of the conflict.

China, like the African continent, had been subjected in the early years of the century to a scramble on the part of the European imperialisms to obtain spheres of influence. Great Britain, Russia, Germany and France had sent expeditionary forces to quell Chinese insurrection and to seize various 'concessions' for themselves. The French took Annam, the Germans occupied Shantung. Britain maintained Hong Kong and checked German influence by holding a position within the Shantung province. From 1902 to 1922 Britain entered into an alliance with Japan in order to counter Russian imperialist designs. Meanwhile, all the familiar colour prejudices of the white peoples were reproduced: foreign clubs were set up to which no Chinese might be admitted, there were parks in which no native might walk. In 1912 the Manchu Emperors were overthrown and a republic established. The impact of the European invasion resulted in a Chinese national renaissance, a movement which is associated mainly with the name of Dr Sun Yat-Sen. This remarkable man formed a party, known as the Kuomintang, whose programme was based on three principles, a recovery of Chinese national unity, the introduction of democracy, and the establishment of social justice. Dr Sun recognised the need for breaking through the wall of isolation which China had built round herself, while preserving the special characteristics of Chinese culture: and, believing intensely in her inherent potentialities, to raise his country from its primitively backward condition. Only 1 per cent. of the nation was as yet literate.

In 1921 Dr Sun was looking mainly for American support in his endeavours to civilise on Chinese lines the disorganised peasant masses. Finding that the help he needed was not adequately forthcoming from that quarter he turned to Lenin, and both Adolf Joffe and Michael Borodin, who were dispatched from Moscow as Soviet agents, assured him that the weakness of his movement lay in the fact that it was appealing almost exclusively to university students and middle-class merchants, while no military force was in existence to safeguard any revolutionary progress.

The next important figure who emerges on the stage of Chinese politics is Chiang Kai-Shek. By this time (1925) China was virtually split up into three political spheres. There was the Northern Government in Peking, the warlords of the various remoter provinces, and the National Government represented by Kai-Shek. Chiang Kai-Shek had extended Nationalist influence from Canton to the Yangtse Valley in Central China, to Hankow and Shanghai. He stood in some respects, in his capacity of leader of the Kuomintang, as the spiritual descendant of Dr Sun, but his sympathies were strongly anti-Communist. Communist influence was powerful in the party, and at Hankow and Shensi Borodin had succeeded in establishing Governments of the Soviet pattern. The Communists are usually regarded as entirely subversive and dependent on Russian dictation, but actually there was already growing up a type of Communism entirely distinct from the brand which Europe has produced, and Chinese Communism was pregnant with interesting possibilities. The immediate result, however, of the Communist movement and of revelations as to the instructions from Moscow to Borodin, directing a policy of land-confiscation, was civil war within the Kuomintang, and in this struggle Chiang Kai-Shek was eventually victorious. By the close of 1927 the National Government was once more united and was successfully waging war against the Northern armies. Peking itself was occupied and the whole of China proper acknowledged the unified Nationalist Government. The question of the inclusion of Manchuria under this regime became the chief political issue, an issue in which Japan expressed the liveliest interest.

Japan's development from a feudal or aristocratic to a

modern industrial-imperialist State had been amazingly rapid. Her population had mounted from twenty-six millions in 1846 to fifty-six millions in 1920, and was increasing regularly at the prodigious rate of 900,000 a year. With the exception of Korea, there was no territory open to receive her emigrants on any sufficient scale—an unsatisfactory prospect, even if emigration could have proved a solution. Japan is the third most densely populated area in the world, and had long ago ceased to be self-supporting. She was dependent on foreign countries for almost all her raw material. Politically her society was deeply divided. The military and aristocratic sections were still pro-capitalist in outlook, the industrialists needed Japanese expansion, and the workers were subjected to a wretchedly low standard of living. An earthquake in Tokyo and Yokohama on September 1, 1923, caused the loss of 160,000 lives, and damage to the extent of £550,000,000. The Communists temporarily gained ground, but both industrialists and militarists were looking more and more to imperialist expansion as a solution of their economic problems. The world-slump had meanwhile seriously aggravated those problems. The British Dominions had erected a high tariff against Japanese goods. The silk-trade with America fell to an alarming extent. China, her main and most hopeful market, had cut herself off by a boycott which she imposed on Japanese goods, largely as a result of her growing suspicion of Japanese aims.

Manchuria had accordingly become a province of great strategic value to Japan. After the Russo-Japanese war China had leased the South Manchurian Railway to Japan for 35 years, and by 1920 Japanese business-men had invested more than 2,000 yen in the country. Moreover, Manchurian soil could supply the soya bean, oil-shale, iron and coal: using Chinese labour Japanese industrialists were now producing 30,000 tons a year from the coal-mines as compared with 300 tons in 1907. Relations between China and Japan became, therefore, more strained with the effort of the new Nationalist movement to incorporate Manchuria under Chinese rule. In 1931 the tension increased as the result of anti-Chinese disturbances in Korea, the Japanese consular police firing on the Chinese

rioters who had been incensed by the attempt to dig irrigation-ditches across Chinese land. The Chinese had built their own parallel railway on a section of the South Manchurian line: the Japanese refused to carry the troops of Chang Tso-Lin, the Governor of three eastern provinces, who had recently become bitterly anti-Japanese. Chang was killed in a railway explosion under highly suspicious circumstances, and his son announced his intention of openly resisting the Japanese schemes. In an official Japanese pamphlet, this young man was picturesquely described as a "most rapacious, wanton and stinking youth."

On September 18, 1931, the Japanese military invasion of Manchuria was launched, and as the result of a successful campaign the Japanese Government set up the puppet-State of Manchukuo. The League of Nations was therefore faced with its first major challenge. China appealed to the League, and Mr Gilbert, the American consul in Geneva, was instructed by his Government to appear and join in the discussions on matters concerned with the Kellogg Pact, but otherwise to play the part of an observer. The Japanese representative requested the appointment of an inquiry-commission, and under Lord Lytton this body sailed to China in February 1932.

The report of the Commission, which was adopted by the League twelve months later, pronounced a verdict against the Japanese, only the Japanese representative voting against this decision. Japan at once announced her intention of resigning from the League.

This crisis was to prove of great importance in its repercussions on subsequent international history. The case for Japan was undoubtedly stronger than that of the later aggressors. She was driven remorselessly by her commercial interests and her serious economic straits to safeguard her limited commercial interests in Manchuria. She was baited by Chinese anarchy and obstruction. Her action in deposing an existing foreign Government and in setting up a Government of her own design was little more than an imitation of past British policy in India, or of American action in Nicaragua, where from 1912 to 1925 the United States had forcibly kept a Conservative Government in power in order to prevent the construction of a

canal rival to that of the Panama. On the other hand, the League had been expressly devised to prevent such an invasion as that which Japan had precipitated. It is true that although Britain and the other imperialist Powers professed through the League to have introduced a new order, they were not themselves prepared to disgorge the territories which they had acquired by the old methods. Yet the Lytton Commission could have arrived at no other conclusion than that Japan was guilty of aggression. She had voluntarily joined the League and given her assent to the establishment of an international regime in which, whatever the provocation, issues precisely of this type were to be determined by arbitration and not by the military action of the aggrieved State. The Kellogg Pact which Japan had signed was equally violated. Japan had been a voluntary participator in these pledges, and yet, the moment that her own interests were at stake, she was ready to flout her pledges and to withdraw from the association which she had helped to form.

The League was accordingly faced with this crucial challenge. It had given its verdict, and its verdict had been defied. The significant fact at this stage is that the League failed to implement its judgment. No military sanctions were necessary and no danger of war could under any circumstances have arisen. The Soviet Union, although observing a scrupulously pacific policy, was directly interested in preventing further Japanese expansion. America, though on most other occasions determinedly isolationist, was prepared to support the League. Japan had no possible ally. Six weeks of economic blockade would have compelled her to desist. It was in this context that Sir John Simon, as British Foreign Secretary, delivered the notorious speech which the Japanese representative, Mr Matsuoka, described as expressing in half an hour 'what he had been trying to say in his bad English for the last ten days.'<sup>1</sup> The British lead effectually killed League action and may indeed be said to have killed the League. For the failure of the League to deal with this first case of major aggression created a precedent of which the future aggressors took careful note. The League, under British influence, had shown itself unwilling to fulfil the major

<sup>1</sup> 1933 Survey of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 492.



object for which it had been formed : national interests—accentuated by the material considerations of the slump—proved stronger than the sense of international obligations.

It was Sir John Simon also who, a few months earlier, had defeated the Italian proposal at the Disarmament Conference to abolish bombing planes, tanks, heavy artillery and poison gas. This proposal had been supported by Germany, Russia, and conditionally by France. Sir John Simon carried an amendment to appoint a commission of experts to consider the scheme, an amendment which ensured an interminable delay at a moment when united action might have produced substantial results. Sir John's tactics and the belated British counter-proposals in March 1933, prevented any such action, and held the proposal up until German rearmament had set in at such a pace that any measure of collateral disarmament had become hopeless.

### *The Japanese attack on China*

The drama of the Far East was not completed with the Manchurian invasion. The influences which had led Japan to undertake the Manchurian adventure were still unsatisfied. Japan was unlikely to view with favour the awakening of China, for slow though Kai-Shek's attempt to establish order and unity might prove to be, the ultimate result could not be other than the emergence of a China determined to resist Japanese imperial ambitions. The need for Japan's acquisition of colonial territory had not lessened. Japanese capitalist interests were increasing alert to the desirability of establishing Japanese supremacy over the Pacific. The militarist ardour for fresh victories was whetted by the probability that the League would do no more than pass pious resolutions against aggression. The way was open. By July 8, 1937, although war was never formally declared, the new campaign may be said to have commenced.

Prétexes for the modern type of aggressive warfare have little historic importance. Incidents are easily manufactured, once the aggressor is determined to strike, and any legal excuse for such action seems, indeed, hardly to be worth inventing. On this occasion the Japanese claimed that the Chinese had opened fire on Japanese troops which were practising manœuvres at Lukouchiao. The location was

well chosen, as Lukouchiao is an important junction connecting the railway running to Nanking and Hankow. If it were necessary seriously to examine the Japanese case, questions would have to be asked as to why the Japanese commander did not inform the Chinese authorities that army manœuvres at this highly strategic point were to be undertaken. The Chinese alleged that the Japanese had demanded the right to enter the Chinese town of Wanping in order to search for a missing soldier, and that, on being refused permission, the Japanese shelled the town and advanced their infantry. These claims are, however, of little account. What is of importance is that reinforcements were rushed up from Manchuria and Japan, and that in a few days war-operations were in full swing.

By the end of the year the Japanese had seized Nanking and were in control of the Yangtse from the coast as far as Wuhu. The Chinese could at this stage offer little effective resistance: their tactics were to withdraw and harass the enemy troops by guerilla methods. The more significant result of the war was that the divisions in Chinese political life were momentarily healed. Chiang Kai-Shek became the commander of a united force in which the Communists were included. The will to resist Japanese supremacy was a tonic to the growing consciousness of the Chinese that they must discover themselves to be a people and rebuild their society on a new basis.

On October 6 the League, in reply to a further appeal from China, passed a resolution condemning Japan and recommending that any possible aid should be extended by the League members individually to China. But by 1937 the League had become so discredited that such utterances had ceased to be of any diplomatic consequence. A conference, including United States representation, was held in Brussels during November, but, once again, the Powers were unprepared to do more than offer verbal remonstrances. The main political development in the war was the announcement that Japan through the Anti-Comintern Pact had joined the Berlin-Rome axis. Japan thus admitted that her designs were in line with Germano-Italian policy in Europe. The anti-comintern nature of the Pact was necessarily a direct challenge to the Soviet Union, an indication, indeed, that the signatories recognised

the Soviet Union to be the most probable focus of any collective anti-Fascist resistance. In July 1938, a local conflict broke out between Japanese and Soviet troops, and was expected in many quarters to prove to be the prelude of a major war. But the Soviet Union was resolute in its intention at almost any cost to avoid hostilities, and the dispute was settled.

- The Japanese now began to adopt a more aggressive attitude towards the British. Bombs were dropped on two British warships in the Yangtse on December 12, 1937, and on December 3 Japanese troops entered the International Settlement at Shanghai. On August 26, 1937, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen was machine-gunned and bombed by Japanese planes as he was travelling from Nanking to Shanghai. The Japanese Government replied formally to the various British protests and in some cases agreed to pay compensation, but it was evident that Japanese policy was hardening in an anti-British direction, inasmuch as she recognised that both Britain and America must stand in the way of Japanese objectives. On April 9, 1939, a customs superintendent was said by the Japanese to have been murdered by four Chinese, and Japan demanded that the four Chinese, alleged to be guilty, should be handed over by the British authorities at Tientsin. The British reply was to the effect that a 'prima facie' case must be made out against these men before the demand could be granted. The Japanese thereupon blockaded the British concession. British nationals attempting to pass the barrier were subjected to gross indignities, and violently anti-British pamphlets were circulated by the Japanese among the Chinese population. A Foreign Office communique of June 16 declared that "British circles cannot but take a most serious view of the further demands which have been made." These 'further demands' included a request that Chinese Government currency should be prohibited. It is perhaps significant of the deterioration of British prestige that the four men were eventually surrendered, in spite of the protests of the Chinese Government, and on the ground that the necessary evidence of their guilt had been established: though Britain refused to agree to the financial demands the general impression created in foreign circles was that she was too weak in the Far East to do other than to capitulate

on the main issue. On August 16, 1939, the Japanese blockaded Hong Kong in order to cut off supplies reaching General Chiang Kai-Shek from the British colony. Preparations were thereupon made to evacuate British women and children.

The break with the League on the part both of Japan and Germany signified nothing less than their determination to carry out their aims in defiance of the principles of collective security and peaceful arbitration. By resigning from the League both these Powers had in effect asserted their repudiation of any international obligations, and the failure of the League to prevent the Manchurian invasion was proof in their minds that the non-Axis powers would not dare to stand in their way.

Japan, however, had involved itself in a more serious struggle than she had probably anticipated. The Chinese resistance hardened. Though compelled to fall back and to endure the atrocities of modern warfare—according to an official Chinese statement 20,000 Chinese were killed by bombs in the first seven months—there was no sign of any popular demoralization. On the contrary, not only was the organization of the Chinese army perceptibly improving, but the stress of war and the realization that there was a national culture to be defended, and a culture, moreover, which was capable of infinite development, disclosed the seeds of a new vitality in the Chinese nation as a whole.

By the end of 1939 the Japanese were no nearer their military objective of destroying the Chinese armies. In 1941 they occupied the ports of Swatow, Foochow, and Wenchow in South China, and had thereby cut off the Chinese from the coast. By November 1939 they had severed China's communications with Indo-China, but they failed to capture Changsha, the capital of Hunan.

According to Chinese calculations the Japanese by the summer of 1939 had lost over 700 aeroplanes and 900,000 of her soldiers. The military position by the end of 1939 was that Japan had seized the key-cities, many ports and the waterways and railways of China: but that well-organised guerilla forces were behind them, particularly in the North and the Canton areas. In particular, the Communist Eighth-Route army, under Generals Mao Tse-tung and Chu-Tek, were actively harassing the Japanese troops.

Indeed, the strength of the Chinese resistance was bewildering to the Japanese authorities, their only explanation being that China was being assisted and encouraged by Britain. In actual fact British help was necessarily limited: armament supplies were probably coming mainly from Russia.

Added to the comparative military embarrassments of Japan were the economic difficulties produced as a result of the war. There was a serious shortage in coal, petroleum-products, rubber, wool and cotton. The food situation was affected in 1939 by a failure in the Korean rice-crop. British and American interests in the Pacific were certainly menaced by Japanese ambitions, but the path of the aggressor had been obstructed by China far more effectively than the democracies at first had dared to anticipate. Although popular sympathy in Britain was undoubtedly from the first directed towards China there was little general appreciation that the cause of China was intimately bound up with the defence of democratic freedom throughout the world. In the minds of British statesmen this distant struggle between two foreign nations was of concern to Britain only because to some extent it threatened the security of the Empire in the Far East. Yet the Sino-Japanese war was nothing less than the opening stage of the war in which Britain was to find herself eventually involved, and the failure of the League Powers to stand actively by China meant that the first round of the universal struggle had been won by the champions of dictatorship-aggression. The authority of the League had been successfully challenged. The enemy had secured an initial tactical advantage, and the gain was due radically to the fact that the democracies were still viewing an international crisis from a sectional nationalist angle.

#### *Hitler's first moves in Europe*

It is necessary now to shift our attention to Europe and to trace the developments of the first stage of the peace-settlement collapse in Germany herself.

The revelation of the June 'purge' and the accounts, so widespread and now unquestionably confirmed, of tortures in the concentration camps, had begun to create an un-

comfortable impression in the minds of European diplomats as to the nature of the new German regime. But, deplorable as its nature might be, its behaviour had so far caused alarm only within the field of domestic affairs. There remained the possibility that Hitler, although Germany had withdrawn from the League, might prove reasonable in his foreign policy. His earlier speeches therefore aroused the greatest interest. *Mein Kampf* contained some alarming implications, but a man's outlook is apt to change when he has assumed official responsibility, and it was hoped that Hitler's previous and somewhat amateur attempts to state a political philosophy might prove to be dated.

Hitler's first Reichstag utterance confirmed these hopes. "The one great task," he declared, "is to assure the peace of the world. . . . Germany will tread no other path than that laid down by the peace-treaties." She "has no thought of invading any country." The withdrawal from the League was excused without any expression of defiance. "As a permanently defamed people," he continued, "it would be very difficult for us to continue to belong to the League." The announcement of the withdrawal on October 14, 1933, took place on the very day that Sir John Simon had proclaimed Britain's intention to attempt a reconciliation between the British and German views. Hitler seemed, however, to be not altogether uncompromising in his decision. In a further speech on November 8, he declared that "the League will never see us again till the last vestige of discrimination (in armament strength) is removed." He added that the German people were not crazy enough to want war. Sir John Simon replied that Great Britain had reduced her armaments "to the edge of risk."

The effect of withdrawal from the League was to isolate Germany completely. From the military standpoint she was still one of the weakest nations in Europe. On January 26, 1934, a Germano-Polish pact was signed, the terms of which were to cover ten years and which was violated in every particular by Hitler in 1939. On January 30, 1934, Hitler announced that Germany desired friendly relations with every country, the Soviet Union included. He added that, once the Saar question was settled, Germany would accept "not only the letter but the spirit of Locarno."

In this apparently favourable atmosphere Mr Eden

visited Berlin in February. In the talks which took place there Germany offered to waive all claim to "offensive weapons," and to accept control of the S.A., S.S. and regular army. Hitler, however, insisted that he must have an air-force "at least half as strong as that of France." A few weeks later, at the end of March, Hitler declared that Germany's frontiers had always fluctuated and would continue to fluctuate until the German people were united. The full significance of this utterance was overlooked in London, but in Paris it created great uneasiness, particularly in view of the fact that meanwhile the German army estimates had been increased by no less than 357,000,000 reichsmark. "I have no intention," Hitler announced to the Associated Press on March 29, "of accepting an army of 250,000 men, and under no circumstances will I submit to the orders of anybody."

The settlement of the Saar territory was due to be carried out in 1935. A plebiscite was conducted under League auspices, the inhabitants being asked whether they wished to be placed under French rule, under German rule, or to remain under international League supervision. The Nazis instituted a 'Deutsche Front' and carried out extensive espionage in connexion with the secret police of Berlin. Terrorist threats were levied against any German national who might dare to vote against reunion with the Reich. Some residents fled before the election took place. There were rumours of a concentration of French troops to prevent disorder. To save this delicate situation from becoming more acute the British proposed that an international police-force should be present during the election, and, accordingly, Swedish, British, Dutch and Italian troops were drafted into the territory. The elections passed off peaceably, and the vote was 90 per cent. in favour of Germany.

The next move in the Nazi drama was the murder of the Austrian Chancellor, but here Germany professed not to be implicated officially. A more direct cause of alarm was Goering's announcement on March 10, 1935, of the extension of the Air Force, followed on the 16th by a decree reintroducing military conscription. At the same time Germany withdrew her offer to renounce the use of bombing machines. The excuse for these ominous developments was offered by

Baron Neurath who declared that "the Allies had been the first to violate the peace treaties, and Germany's decision to do so had cleared the air." Sir John Simon and Mr Anthony Eden visited Berlin shortly afterwards in order to negotiate a pact in regard to Germany's eastern frontiers. The only result of the visit was that Hitler insisted that he must have an army of 550,000 men and a fleet up to the strength of 35 per cent. of the British Navy: incidentally, he mentioned to the Foreign Secretary that the German Air Force was already equal in strength to that of the British.

On May 2, 1935, France signed a pact with the Soviet Union. On May 21, Hitler reiterated his claim that it was not Germany who had first violated the Versailles Treaty: the Powers had done so by failing to disarm. But he added, "Germany will scrupulously maintain every treaty which is signed voluntarily, and, in particular, all the obligations of Locarno." He was willing, he said, to add an air-pact to the Locarno Treaty. "Germany accepts the limitation of armament-parity in the air and a navy up to 35 per cent. of British strength. This demand is final and abiding."

The British Foreign Office immediately took notice of this declaration, and asked for further information in regard to certain points, as, for example, what limitation standard of armaments would be required to bring Germany back into the League. No answer was given by the German Government.

Meanwhile, Britain was exploring every avenue which might achieve conciliation. Her exploration led her to strange destinations. On June 18, 1935, she concluded a naval agreement with Germany by which the German fleet was to be enlarged up to the desired 35 per cent., this ratio between the two countries not to be affected by the naval constructions undertaken by other Powers. This convention, was held behind the backs of France and Italy, and was a further repudiation on the part of Britain of the League conception. The British Government, which had condemned Germany for flouting the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty, had deliberately concurred in and indeed abetted a breach of the Versailles naval clauses.

The naval convention was, moreover, an indication of the widening breach between Britain and France. Britain's despair of collective security had resulted in this separate



bargain with Germany. France turned to Russia, her former ally, although in negotiating this agreement she acted more correctly: the Pact was made within the terms of the League and only after the approval of the British Government had been secured. The German reaction, however, to this alliance was immediate. So long as the Soviet Union was an outcast Hitler was ready to declare his desire for friendly relations: but as soon as the Franco-Soviet Pact had been concluded he denounced Communism as the supreme enemy against which Nazism was the final bulwark. On December 6, Hitler told the British ambassador in Berlin that the "Franco-Soviet military alliance had rendered the idea of any air-pact out of the question."

On March 7, 1936, came the next dramatic coup. A month before the Soviet Pact was ratified by the French Chamber Hitler had informed a French journalist that any enmity between Germany and France was unthinkable. Immediately after this interview the French Ambassador was instructed to discover from Hitler what basis of *rapprochement* between the two countries was in his mind. He was told that proposals were being prepared. Suddenly, on the morning of March 7, without any previous warning, the European Governments were informed that German troops were already marching into the demilitarised Rhine-zone. Locarno as well as Versailles was disowned. The German troops took up their new positions with all the ceremonial of triumph. "But," Hitler declared, "we have now no territorial demands to make in Europe."

The Hitler technique was extraordinarily skilful: the alarm which the sudden defiant invasion of the Rhineland had caused was at once followed by Hitler's 'seven suggestions for European security,' and European statesmen were left to wonder which was the true Hitler—the author of these violent acts of diplomatic gangstering or this ardent prophet of peace. The 'suggestions' had evidently been devised with care. They proposed an air-pact between all the Powers and a new demilitarised zone between Germany, France and Belgium. Still more attractive was the promise that Germany would, if these suggestions were adopted, re-enter the League. The proposals were well-timed, for European opinion was ripe for division: one large school of thought was so incensed with Italy's Abyssinian exploit—

of which we shall take account in the next section—that it was prepared to be tolerant to Germany. On March 26, Mr Eden replied to these overtures that France had been induced to give up her scheme of a separate Rhenish republic only on the guarantee that after a fifteen years' occupation, the zone, now invaded, would be permanently demilitarised. He also argued that Germany had ignored Belgium in her act of reoccupation: Belgium was now threatened, and since she was no party to the Soviet Pact, Hitler's excuses that the invasion was a reply to the French alliance with Russia were irrelevant so far as Belgium was concerned.

On April 1, 1936, Germany presented a further peace-proposal. Four months were to elapse before the actual negotiations were to be undertaken, and during this interval there would be no reinforcement of the Rhineland garrisons. Immediate negotiations, however, were to be entered into between Germany, France and Belgium (with Italy and Great Britain as parties to the deliberations) for a twenty-five years' pact of non-aggression, to be supplemented by an air-pact. As a pledge of the signatories' intention to carry out these undertakings Germany and France were to agree to eliminate from the teaching in their schools and from their press and literature all influences "calculated to poison relationships between the two peoples."

The British Government, on May 7, replied to this proposal by asking whether Germany regarded herself as now in a position to conclude treaties: and whether Germany would respect the political and territorial status then existing in Europe, except so far as this status was modified by free negotiation. Although this questionnaire was inspired by a genuine desire to obtain fuller information on doubtful points, it was attacked fiercely in the German press, apparently on the ground that it had been made public. The Nazi party organ, the *Völkische Beobachter* described it as "cat-burglary." No reply to the inquiries was ever given by the German Government.

On May 1, Hitler denounced the "foreign lies" that Germany was meditating an attack on Austria or Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, on August 24, 1936, Hitler issued a decree extending military service for conscripts to two years. This was explained by the German press on the grounds

that Germany was now the main barrier against Communism. Shortly afterwards, at the Nazi rally at Nuremberg, Hitler denounced the 'international Jewish revolutionary centre,' and at Munich on November 8 spoke of the Red menace threatening Europe from which Germany might have to deliver European civilization. A Four Year Plan was also announced at Nuremberg to provide Germany with war-material.

On January 30, 1937, Hitler delivered the third of his 'programme speeches.' "Peace," he said, "is our dearest treasure": there was no humanly conceivable object of dispute between Germany and France: it is "my ardent wish for co-operation with Britain." This was accompanied by a new batch of repudiations of various applications of the Versailles Treaty: the liens on German railways, arranged under the Dawes and Young Plans, were thrown overboard. "But," Hitler added, "the period of so-called surprises is now over."

Did any of these proposals represent a sincere desire for peace on the part of Hitler, or were they part of a deliberately camouflaged scheme of deception? If Hitler had been differently treated, could war have been averted? Nazi advocates and some quasi-sympathisers argue that Hitler was ultimately driven to war by the trend of a distrustful and even aggressive diplomacy at this time on the part of the other European States. But this case is difficult to sustain for two reasons. In the first place British and French statesmen were desperately anxious to avoid war with Hitler at almost any cost: they were not at any time in this period seriously prepared to take collective action and evoke joint military sanctions. Secondly, the military preparations which Hitler had put in hand—not as a result of the failure of his overtures, but before those overtures were made—suggest that he already contemplated developments which would at least incur the risk of war. It is difficult even to sustain the argument that Hitler was at first merely animated with a desire to re-establish Germany's ante-1914 position: a perusal of *Mein Kampf* discloses that from the outset his aims were far more dangerously ambitious. In any event a historical survey must resist that fascinating temptation of engaging in speculations as to what might have happened, had other courses been adopted: it is

concerned primarily with what did in fact happen. All that is permissible, at least at this stage, is to point to the fact that British-French policy was neither that of firm opposition to Hitler nor of whole-hearted agreement. The statesmen merely stood by and watched his violent acts of aggression, contenting themselves with cautious and obviously futile protests. They did not take decisive action, even when Germany was weak<sup>1</sup>: nor were they able to feel such confidence in Hitler's assurances that they could solicit his favour by assisting him to fulfil what he claimed to be Germany's just demands. The compromise was ineffectual. The Allies antagonised the dictators without frustrating their designs. The European situation deteriorated rapidly, and any safeguards which stood between them and final catastrophe were deliberately discarded.

We have now to turn to an occasion when the League was given a second opportunity and pursued a policy different from that taken in the case of Japan. The villain of the piece, however, was not Hitler but Mussolini.

### *Italian invasion of Abyssinia*

With the accession of M. Laval to the position of French Foreign Minister in place of M. Barthou in 1934, the relations of France and Italy became more friendly. Early in January Laval paid a visit to Rome, and, shortly afterwards, France agreed to cede a large but barren piece of territory in Africa, to transfer to Italy some 2,500 shares in the French-owned railway to Addis Ababa, and to allow children born in Tunisia before 1945 to retain Italian nationality. It is true that these concessions were not, in themselves, particularly generous. Mussolini had every reason to believe that he could rely on France to resist in her own interests any German designs on Austria: and the positive grants fell far short of Italian claims. What was much more important to Italy was a sufficient *rapprochement* with France to ensure that there was no opposition in that quarter to the coming Abyssinian adventure. The readiness of Italy to welcome these slight French overtures was a

<sup>1</sup> It is beyond question that when the German troops marched into the Rhineland their orders were to retire immediately if they encountered French resistance. There was no resistance.

sign, in fact, that the Ethiopian invasion had already been planned.

Mussolini had in these conversations obtained a promise from Laval that France would not view with disfavour an Italian 'economic influence' in Abyssinia. But, though Laval assured the French Senate on March 26, 1935, that there was nothing in the agreement which threatened Abyssinian independence, the subsequent record of that statesman suggests as by no means impossible that much more had been, in effect, given away. Marshal de Bono's disclosures<sup>1</sup> now show that the war was planned in the autumn of 1933, so that Laval may well have been aware of, and possibly have concurred in, Mussolini's intentions.

On April 11, 1935, a three-Power conference was held at Stresa to consider the situation created by the extension of the German army and the establishment of a German air-force. Mr Eden who had visited Berlin and Moscow, was ill, and Britain was represented by Sir John Simon and Mr Ramsay MacDonald. When shortly afterwards the question was raised in Parliament whether any guarantees had been given at this conference that Italy would be left free to attack Abyssinia, Sir Samuel Hoare, who had by then become Foreign Secretary, replied that the subject of Abyssinia had never even been mentioned.

Abyssinia, or Ethiopia, was the one remaining African State which had not lost its independence to European imperialism: it was therefore the one African State which Mussolini could attack without becoming embroiled with an European Power. Although nominally Christian it was little less backward than other African native provinces. It had been admitted to the League of Nations on the advocacy of Italy and France, Britain being opposed to this recognition. The Emperor, Haile Selassie I, had ascended the throne in 1930. He was an enlightened and progressive ruler, far in advance of his people. He had granted a constitution in 1931, a constitution which was not remarkably effective in practice. Slavery was by no means extinct.

As with the Manchurian invasion and the subsequent acts of aggression it is not of much value to examine the claims which Italy presented as her *casus belli*: for it is clear that war had been planned, whatever the circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> *La Preparazione e le Prime Operazioni.*

Mussolini's pretext for imperial expansion were that North and South America had virtually closed their doors to Italian emigrants, and that Italy's resources in coal and iron-ore were deficient. Under the Treaty of Ucciali in 1889 Italy had acquired some rights of protectorate over Ethiopia until she was ignominiously defeated at Adowa in 1896. On the other hand Italy by her invasion violated a treaty of August 2, 1928, under which she had agreed with Abyssinia not to have recourse to arms over any dispute. The League Covenant was also ignored, without even the attempt at an excuse.

The actual clash occurred at Walwal on December 5, 1934, in an area which had been placed under Italian control, although this control had never been officially recognised by the Ethiopian Government. The Italians plunged into the war with a ferocity which disgusted a world which had already begun to recognise that modern warfare has no regard for gentlemanly rules. Two hundred and fifty-nine tons of mustard gas were declared in transit through the Suez Canal before the end of February 1936. An attempt to murder Marshal Graziani at Addis Ababa was revenged by the murder by the Italians of Ras Desta, the Emperor's son-in-law. Three other Ethiopian generals were shot. The Abyssinian Army possessed no serious equipment. They were mowed down by Italian bombers and the natives choked with gas. The Italian military organization proved remarkably efficient, and by May 5, 1936, Italian forces had entered the capital. On May 2, the Emperor fled from his conquered country.

What was the part played by the League of Nations in this inglorious episode? On September 11, 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare made a memorable speech to the League Assembly in which he declared that Britain was fully resolved to stand by her obligations under the Covenant. "The League stands," he said, "and my country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression." This speech had an enthusiastic reception in Britain and among the smaller States: it may not have been altogether a coincidence that it was made so comparatively short a time before the British General Election of November 14. The average voter felt assured

that the Conservatives could be trusted to give full support to the League. The Conservative or 'National Government' was returned by 431 seats to 184. Three weeks later, on December 9, the British people learnt to its dismay of certain conversations which had taken place between Hoare and Laval in Paris, the gist of which were that part of Abyssinia should be handed over to Italy in order to terminate the war. The only prominent supporters of the scheme were Lord Rothermere, Lord Beaverbrook, and a lady who had bought up *The Saturday Review* and converted it into a hysterically imperialist propaganda-sheet, Lady Houston by name.

Abyssinia appealed to the League in January and in March 1935. Both of these appeals came at a moment which the League found to be highly inconvenient: Italy was regarded as a promising recruit who was to be enlisted in a police force designed to prevent German aggression, and now the League was asked to brand this promising recruit as an aggressor. The first appeal coincided with Laval's visit to Rome, and the second with Hitler's alarming rearmament revelations. The Abyssinian appeals therefore resulted only in the appointment of a commission, a procedure which was so leisurely that the Abyssinian Government complained that the Italians were being given a free hand to complete their military preparations.

Hostilities had broken out in October 1935. When Sir Samuel Hoare made his famous speech the intentions of Italy were beyond all doubt. On October 7, the Council of the League unanimously voted that Italy was the aggressor and had violated the Covenant. On October 11, fifty States confirmed the verdict of the Council, Switzerland refusing to commit herself to the application of sanctions, while Austria, Hungary and Albania, the other neighbours of Italy, expressly dissented from such application. Britain pressed, however, for further, though cautious, action. It was decided to apply financial sanctions, to refuse the acceptance of imports from Italy and to impose a limited embargo on exports. What Italy most needed in order to prosecute the war was oil, but oil was excluded from the embargo-list on the ground that it was not a commodity controlled by the League. Had oil been included it is not too much to say that the Italian war-effort must have been

frustrated. It must also be recorded that there were several indications that the United States were prepared to join in the oil-embargo, if it was imposed by the League.

The French attitude was that of extreme unwillingness to offend her new-found friend. The British Government was no less anxious to avoid a League-war, of which she would have been compelled to take the main brunt, so far as naval operations were concerned. The French were luke-warm as to the application even of limited sanctions. France emphasised that the real danger was Germany and repeatedly asked whether, if the sanction-policy led to Italian retaliation, Britain would guarantee her immediate support against a German attack. The British Government evaded, however, any such specific guarantee.

It was in that context that Laval waylaid Hoare and obtained his assent to a proposed deal with Mussolini. The deal, in effect, meant that Italy would be given almost two-thirds of Ethiopian territory, much more ground, in fact, than she had at that time succeeded in conquering. The British public learned of these conversations with dismay. Not only Labour but Conservative members protested that their constituents were infuriated by a proposal which was a complete repudiation of the Foreign Secretary's original declaration and a betrayal of the promise on which the Government had won the election, the promise of a whole-hearted support of League principles. The most that can be said for the Hoare-Laval proposals is that they might have been justified if they had been made at a time when the Ethiopian troops were at the point of surrender. But at that moment there was no such situation: indeed, most European calculations were that Italy had involved herself in a war which would prove lengthy and highly costly to herself.

Further than this, any such deal would have entirely violated League principles: the nation which had been declared the aggressor would have been deliberately handed the spoils. Before the storm of popular indignation Mr Baldwin bowed. Sir Samuel Hoare was temporarily thrown overboard and Anthony Eden was appointed in his place. The limited sanctions continued to be employed, and, being limited, failed to prevent an Italian victory. For a while after the Italian conquest the League had to listen in



embarrassed silence to the passionate protests of the ex-Emperor. At last, in July 1936, sanctions were called off. The ghost was laid, and, once again, the aggressor had defied the League successfully.

The League had, in fact, paid the penalty of applying sanctions with a deliberate intention not to make them effective. As Mr Churchill wrote in *The Evening Standard*, "it is not true to say that economic sanctions have failed. It was the will-power to enforce them in a real and biting manner which failed." In a sense this fiasco was more damaging to the League than its impotency against Japan. Half-measures are sometimes more vicious in their effects than no measures. The sanctions imposed, while completely failing to check Italian military operations, infuriated Italian opinion to as great an extent as if the League had actually gone to war. The official Italian attitude towards Britain grew so defiant that the Mediterranean Fleet daily expected attack. There were rumours of a 'suicide club,' a body of Italian airmen who had eagerly volunteered to fly across the Alps and bomb London. The Italian press pursued a regular campaign of vilification. The British were accused of despicable hypocrisy, on the ground that they had gained many of their colonial possessions by the methods of military force which Italy was now employing. As has already been pointed out, there was a sting of reality in this indictment. So long as there existed rich, imperial 'satisfied' Powers side by side with dissatisfied Powers, such as Japan and Italy, and so long as it was these satisfied Powers who declared that the traditional system of imperial expansion must be abandoned, so long there must remain an element of insincerity in their claim. The League was, in fact, morally vitiated by the fact that the existing imperial Powers were unwilling to contribute to such a new world-order as, in theory the League envisaged, by applying such an order to their own colonial possessions. It was Joseph Chamberlain, the arch-imperialist, who seems to some extent to have envisaged the possibility of the British Empire itself contributing to a more liberal imperialism. As Mr W. K. Hancock has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the British Empire in the nineteenth century "did not abolish political frontiers

<sup>1</sup> *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*: Vol. II. Problems of Economic Policy 1918-39. Part I.

but by refusing to enforce them by economic barriers it diminished their importance. It showed a way by which empires in future, unlike all empires of the past, could dissolve without disintegrating—by bringing themselves into a wider world outlook. . . . It was Joseph Chamberlain, of all people, who most emphatically and proudly enunciated Great Britain's rejection of privileged imperial ownership."

The British Government's excuse for acquiescing in, and indeed directing half-hearted League measures was that no other country would have supported her in taking the full measures which the Covenant enjoined. "We alone have taken these military precautions," Sir Samuel Hoare declared to the House of Commons (December 19, 1935). "There is the British fleet in the Mediterranean, there are the British reinforcements in Egypt, in Malta and Aden. Not a ship, not a machine, not a man has been moved by any other member State." This statement is true enough, but it merely discloses that fundamental weakness of the League to which attention has already been drawn. The States which composed it were still, politically and economically, nationalist entities. Whenever they were confronted with a challenge to League authority, their separate political and economic interests outweighed their sense of obligation to international responsibilities. Each Government from its sectional, national standpoint weighed the risks of war to itself and the effect which the threat of war was likely to have on its trade. Those considerations, and not the spirit of collective security, were the main factors influencing their decision.

An attempt was made by Italian advocates to show that the League had behaved differently over the Chaco Boreal issue, a dispute which had broken out for a second time in 1931, between Paraguay and Bolivia. This was, however, no precedent, for in that instance both parties were willing, formally at least, to accept League intervention. When Paraguay accepted and Bolivia rejected the League commission report, an embargo of arms was lifted as regards the former, and intensified in the case of the latter party. The Duce, on the contrary, announced as early as October 2 that Italy would carry on the war whether sanctions were ordered or not.

There was more substance in the Italian argument that

the League had treated Japan and Germany differently from herself. The main answer to this is that two wrongs do not make a right: the failure to employ sanctions in both those cases obviously could not justify the non-employment of sanctions against every other disputant whom the League found to be an aggressor, unless the League was finally to renounce the whole of its jurisdiction.

It is important to recall that Article XVI of the Covenant had insisted on the imposition of sanctions. "Should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants . . . it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations . . . between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a member of the League or not. It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League. The members of the League agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this Article, in order to minimise the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures. . . ." On October 4, 1921, this Article was modified by an amendment laying down that the unilateral action of the defaulting State did not create in itself an act of war: the onus of when and how sanctions were to be employed was laid on the Council. "The framework of the League," writes Dr A. B. Keith,<sup>1</sup> ". . . despite its obvious defects, one of which was the normal rule of unanimity in decisions of the Council, . . . was by no means unworkable: the vital issue was whether the members would be willing to work it. On that point depended the question whether the danger of aggression by States eager for power would be removed."

The sorry story of Abyssinia needs little further comment. On June 10, 1936, Mr Neville Chamberlain declared at a public gathering that the continuance of sanctions would be "the very midsummer of madness." On July 4, the

<sup>1</sup> *The Causes of the War.*

Assembly of the League approved the withdrawal of sanctions, South Africa and the Soviet Union—through M. Litvinov—protesting against this surrender. Finally, on November 3, 1938, Lord Halifax announced a *de jure* recognition of Italy's conquest, that conquest which had been won in defiance of all League principles, and, it might be said, of all decent and moral principles. That the British Government felt no overwhelming distaste for acquiescence in this odious *fait accompli* may possibly be deduced from the visit of Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax to Rome on January 11, 1939. There these statesmen met the new Emperor of Abyssinia and the Duce, who had been responsible for this sordid adventure, with cordial greetings. It is interesting to note that the Duce found no time in the midst of this ceremonial goodwill to mention to the British Prime Minister that he was about to plan the conquest of Albania.

The flags in Rome waved, the salutes were given, and Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax were duly toasted. Meanwhile, Haile Selassie, shorn of the empire which Britain admitted morally to be his, lived the life of a poor middle-class exile in a small house in Bath. He had trusted in Britain, but neither Edward VIII nor George VI took notice of his royal rank. The debts owed him by certain British firms were not paid, and on his recourse to law judgment was given against him on the ground that Italy also claimed the sum.<sup>1</sup> The Court of Appeal reversed this decision, but by then Italy's seizure of Abyssinia had been recognised and the ex-Emperor therefore lost his money. Most of his private resources had been spent in helping his exile-subjects, for, with an almost incredible meanness no grant was made by Britain or any of the League Powers for their support. Haile Selassie had indeed paid a heavy price for trusting to the League. There is some excuse<sup>2</sup> for the fiction which circulated widely in London at the time the British guarantee was given to Poland. Haile Selassie is supposed to have wired to the President of the Polish Republic: "Learn that you have received the promise of British support. You have my warmest sympathy."

<sup>1</sup> Haile Selassie v. Cable & Wireless Co. 1938. Ch. 545.

*The War in Spain*

No other western European State in the twentieth century had remained so stagnant as Spain. The Church, the army and the landlords were forces which tended to obstruct any effectual advance from semi-feudal conditions. The religious Orders of the Church, and particularly the Jesuits, administered vast capital resources. It is true that they were trustees rather than legal owners: nevertheless, these "underpaid trustees" as an English apologist has picturesquely described them, derived great political influence from their control of commercial interests. The army, since the American war at the close of the nineteenth century, consisted disproportionately of officers—one officer to every six non-commissioned soldiers: and these officers were well paid. The owners of the large country estates gave their peasant-employees wretchedly low wages: Koestler reckons<sup>1</sup> that not more than .009 per cent. of the land was held by the peasants and that the farm-workers usually received no more than three pesetas a day—until the Government in 1933 raised their wages to eight pesetas. "There were landowners in Estremadura," he continues, "who employed men for twelve hours a day and gave them one meal a day in lieu of wages." The proletarian population was largely illiterate: as late as 1930 there were 45,000 children in Madrid alone who were receiving no school-education.

The immediate effect of neutrality in the world-war had been financially beneficial to Spain, and the boom lasted till 1920. The gold reserve in the Bank of Spain was quadrupled. As a consequence there was a sudden spurt of industrial activity, particularly in Catalonia, where strong separatist sympathies had for many years existed. The Catalonians had always resented being taxed, as they saw it, to provide for the rest of Spain. Other portions of the country, such as the Basque province, were also 'regional' in their political outlook.

By 1921 a slump had set in, wages were cut, and there were serious labour disorders. The King adopted the time-honoured remedy for internal unrest of engaging in a

<sup>1</sup> *Spanish Testament.*

foreign war, but his choice of the scene of hostilities was unfortunate. Abd el Krim and his Riff tribesmen routed the Spanish so completely that the Spanish general, Silvestre, committed suicide in July 1921. The King appointed Primo de Rivera as dictator, his rule lasting till 1930. De Rivera modelled himself on the Italian Fascist pattern, undertook large public works and paid for them by increased taxation and loans from foreign bonds. It was, on his initiative that Spain withdrew from the League for two years, Germany obtaining the permanent seat on the Council which Spain herself had claimed.

In 1930 the world-depression struck Spain so severely that de Rivera was forced to resign. The King fell back on a constitutional policy, but the Catalan Separatists, the Socialists and Republicans joined forces against him. Even the army was affected, and the Republican flag was hoisted at the Jaca garrison. The municipal elections showed sweeping Republican gains and on April 14, 1931, the Republic was proclaimed in Madrid. The King, who had amassed a considerable property abroad, fled from the country. The revolution had been entirely peaceful in character and was middle-class and liberal in its aspirations. The leader of the new Government, Señor Azaña, found himself confronted with the problem which any reformist movement in Spain must inevitably encounter, the problem of releasing the State from the stifling grip of ecclesiastical domination. The Church was forbidden to take any part in State education or trade, and State grants for the stipends of priests were abolished. The Religious Orders, however, were not expelled. The Church lost £6,000,000 worth of property, but the Jesuits still administered a sum of £14,000,000 vested in commercial enterprises, and this capital was untouched. The Republican Government was, in fact, beginning already to find itself exposed to attack from both sides, from the reactionary Catholic and landlord elements, and from the gradually consolidating Left, who demanded a socialist programme. The Government feared to antagonise the Church any further, and Lerroux, the Radical leader, agreed to the resumption of payment in 1933 of State subsidies for the rural clergy. A Government of a more progressive character was in office from December 1931 till November 1933, and introduced a policy of

agrarian reform. The Jesuit Order was at last dissolved. These more extreme measures produced their own reaction : the 1933 elections resulted in a landslide to the Right, and Gil Robles became the leader of the anti-Republican forces.

By the time of the next election, February 1936, the Popular Front had been formed on much the same basis as it was formed in France—only the Catalonian Anarchists refusing to co-operate — and the consequences were immediate. It is important to recall the statistics of this election, for the argument was subsequently advanced by the supporters of General Franco that the Left had unconstitutionally obtained a majority. 4,356,000 votes were given to the Popular Front, and 4,570,000 to the Right parties, while the Centre polled 340,000. The Centre therefore, so far as the votes of the electorate were concerned, determined the balance, though, according to the Secretariat of the Spanish Parliament, the votes of the Basque Nationalists gave the Left a clear majority of half a million votes. Like the British system, the distribution of Spanish seats did not accord with the proportion of votes. The Popular Front won 270 seats, the Right only 140, while the Centre held 60.<sup>1</sup> Even if the Centre were to be reckoned as an anti-Front party, the progressives were legitimately entitled to form the Government.

The contention that this was not a properly elected Government cannot be seriously sustained. If such an objection were valid, many British elections would have to be disputed on the same grounds. Much more substantial was the argument that the Popular Front, presided over by Azaña, was morally impotent. There can be no question that violent disorders occurred, that some 250 convents and churches were burnt in four months, and that in Madrid and elsewhere murders and pillage were rife. *The Times* of May 18, 1937, declared that the number of executions without trial had amounted in Madrid and Barcelona alone to 56,000. But this particular claim can only be accepted as a justification for the rebellion if it can be proved that the outrages were perpetuated exclusively by the Left : and this is very far from the truth. The Right had already shown its predisposition to violence when it suppressed a

<sup>1</sup> Professor Peers reckons (*The Spanish Tragedy*) that of this assembly 256 deputies would normally vote with the Left, 52 with the Centre, and 165 with the Right.

rising in the Asturias (October 1934) with savage brutality, the total death-roll being, according to the official figures, 1,335 killed and 2,951 wounded. Other authorities state that not less than 2,000 were massacred in the Asturias and that the total list of killed was between five and six thousand. This was planned, deliberate brutality, not the criminal action of the underworld. It cannot, indeed, be maintained that there was any monopoly of murder and rioting on the part of the Left. The Fascist sections in Spain were busily engaged in a campaign of murder. Some of the crimes attributed to the Left were almost certainly the acts of Fascist *provocateurs*. Such an incident as that associated with a relation of one of Franco's ambassadors were of almost daily occurrence. There is evidence to show that this bravado and his confederates waited for a working-class family, the father of whom was prominently associated with political activities, and shot in cold-blood the wife and one of the children on their return from a Sunday outing. The case came before the criminal courts and was dismissed, the judge, it was said, having been bribed by persons in high quarters.

There is no doubt, indeed, that the Government in this early period failed to keep order. The Falangists on the Right and the Anarchists on the Left were the chief offenders. Spain is the only country where Anarchism has a large following, and particularly during the earlier part of the war the Government found these quasi-supporters to be a considerable embarrassment. Their political principles led them to reject any centralised authority, and, when on the outbreak of hostilities they took the field, they insisted in adopting their own military tactics, usually, since they were amateurs in the art of war, with disastrous results. Some of them were high-minded and visionary idealists: but among the Anarchist rank and file there were criminals of a dangerous type.

These charges of hooliganism and atrocity were the chief basis of the case for the Right. In April 1936, Gil Robles warned Azaña that the country was drifting into chaos and 'bolshevism,' and that it would be necessary to take vigorous action to check it. But the issue was not as simple as the apologists for the rebellion would have us suppose. These acts of barbarity perpetrated in the name



of the Left, undoubtedly took place, although their number has almost certainly been grossly exaggerated: but, as has already been suggested, a fair proportion of them were perpetrated by Fascist elements. Moreover, the destruction of churches was justified by the Left on the ground that they were being used as centres of Fascist conspiracy and as stores for weapons and ammunition: "it was in the churches that the Fascists who murdered workers received sanctuary," wrote Hernandez, editor of the Communist paper, *Mundo Obrero*. Many of the clergy were suspected of co-operation with, and were indeed known to be implicated in, seditious acts. Certainly, these crimes of violence against ecclesiastical persons and property were spontaneous mob-violence and not systematically planned.<sup>1</sup>

It might, however, be legitimately argued that, whatever the origins of these outrages, whether they were planned or spontaneous, whether they were mainly the work of the Falangists or the Anarchists, the Government had shown itself too weak to fulfil its functions, and that steps to overthrow it were therefore warranted. Against this claim must be set the damning and indisputable evidence that the rebellion had been planned long before these disorders occurred. The leader of the Monarchist Party, Antonio Goicoechea admitted in a speech delivered at San Sebastian on November 22, 1937, that his own party with other Right-wing organizations had planned a *coup d'état* in March 1934, to be achieved if necessary by civil war: and, if by civil war, with the help of the Italian Government.

It seems impossible, in the light of this evidence, to deny that a military attempt to overthrow a progressive Government would have been made, even if that Government had been able to preserve complete order. Had the excuse of the outrages been genuine the leaders of the Right could have offered the services of their supporters to enable the Government to quell both Falangist and Anarchist intrigues. They offered no such help, for their plans for overthrowing the Government by violence were already complete.

On July 12, 1936, Lieutenant José Castillo, a member

<sup>1</sup> The damage done to churches in Catalonia suggested, as I saw myself, rioting: but not that deliberately planned destruction which the Right frequently alleged to have taken place.—K. I.

of the Assault Guards—a police force formed by the Republican Government in 1931—was shot in Madrid by the Fascists. On the following day the friends of Castillo revenged his death by shooting Calvo Sotelo, a deputy of the Right who had been accused of misusing public funds in his former capacity of Finance Minister. The Government arrested those members of the Assault Guards who were believed to have been responsible for the murder. But the die was now cast, and on the night of July 17-18 the rebellion broke out.

General Francisco Franco arrived in Morocco from the Canary Islands by aeroplane. The fact that he was able to do so is evidence of the weakness of Azaña's Government in dealing with its enemies. Franco had been sent into exile in 1936, and had been left free to plot treason to his heart's content. A similar policy was adopted towards other military suspects: as John Mackintosh remarks,<sup>1</sup> the Government "punished them just enough to make them bitter and resentful (antagonism to the Republic was in any case ingrained in the officer caste) and left them unimpeded to plot as they willed."

It is significant that the rebels relied largely on Moroccan troops: the Spanish people did not rally to acclaim Franco as their deliverer. Under General Queipo de Llano the Spanish coast was invaded and Algeciras and Seville captured. Risings took place simultaneously in other big cities. In Madrid and Barcelona the rebellion was crushed, but in Toledo, Vigo, Corunna, Saragossa, Valladolid and Cadiz, Franco's cause was successful. The rebels mustered three-quarters of the Spanish regular army, half the Civil Guard, the Moors and large numbers of foreign legionnaires, together with most of the arsenals with their heavy and light armament. The Government in the military field had to rely on hastily organised workers' militia units and a few trained troops: but they possessed the gold reserves of the country, the greater part of the navy—minus officers<sup>2</sup>—and the regular air-force. The Government held the east of Spain, while the rebel territory extended from the north-west coast to the Portuguese frontier and the south, excluding Bilbao, the Asturias and the Basque provinces. At an early stage they were in possession of the north from

<sup>1</sup> *The Paths that led to War.*

Galicia to Aragon, and Andalusia and Estremadura in the south. At first an overwhelming victory for the rebels seemed to be imminent. The Government was now paying for its refusal to take the preparations of the reactionaries seriously, and the enthusiastic militia-recruits had had no training sufficient to render them efficient troops against Franco's Moors and the regular Spanish army. They were short of equipment, and particularly of heavy armament. Moreover, the Popular Front was far from united, and only when the situation grew more desperate were their inherent jealousies and rival policies to some extent submerged. The Anarchists, as has already been mentioned, refused on principle to acknowledge military authority and were specially antagonistic to the Communists who stood for complete centralization. The P.O.U.M. represented forces which were popularly supposed to emanate from Trotskyist sources, and advocated an extreme revolutionary policy, such as collective farming, its propaganda insisting that the Popular Front was merely bourgeois. The Communists found themselves representing a moderate policy which was essential, in their view, at this stage of Spanish immaturity. Catalanian separatism also played its part in promoting disunity and was at first uninterested in the course of the war in the south: visitors to Barcelona in the earlier stages of the struggle found that, although petrol was precious and the supplies of Madrid entirely dependent on petrol-driven transport, taxis were still plying in the Barcelona streets and there was little attempt to ration food-consumption.

The rebels had no such problems to face. Although they were also fundamentally divided—the Carlist and Catholic elements had little in common with the Falangists—they were ready to sink their differences in a common hatred of progressivism. There was no shortage of food or armaments in their territory, and Portugal proved, in view of her geographical position, a convenient ally. Portugal broke relations with the Government of Spain as early as October 23, 1936, and became virtually a base for rebel supplies. In the autumn of 1936 General Mola captured Irun on the French frontier, and San Sebastian fell soon after. Moving up the Tagus valley the insurgents reached the outskirts of Madrid early in November. But here they received their first check. They had confidently expected to capture the

capital in a few days, but they were met with a heroic resistance, strengthened by the presence of 15,000 foreign volunteers in the International Brigade. Under General Miaja the city became so well defended that, in spite of months of heavy bombing and shelling, there was no surrender until the war itself was lost.

General Franco now turned his attention to the Basques. Malaga had fallen on February 8, 1937, but the Asturias, and Basque province formed a bulge in the north, offering themselves as a comparatively easy prey to the rebel strategists, since they were completely cut off from the rest of the Government supporters. In April the rebels from their base at Vitoria opened a campaign of ruthless severity. Bilbao and the adjacent villages were ravaged by daily air-raids. On April 26 Guernica was completely destroyed. Santander surrendered at the end of August, and with the fall of Gijon in October the victory was complete. The Basques and the Asturias fought bravely, but they were starving and possessed scanty munitions. Thousands of Basque children were evacuated to France, Britain and Belgium. The appalling destruction and the human suffering caused in this campaign were a foretaste of the effect of modern warfare waged by an entirely merciless enemy.

Meanwhile, the Republic Government had undergone various changes. Largo Caballero, the Socialist leader, became Prime Minister in September 1936, and two Communist deputies were admitted to the Government. In November the Government left Madrid for Valencia, and in May, 1937, owing to trouble with the Catalans, Caballero resigned, and a new cabinet was formed with Dr Negrin as premier. The Government forces were now reaping the benefit of intensive training, a 'people's anti-Fascist army' having been organised under Indalecio Prieto, the Defence Minister. On December 15 the Government troops occupied Teruel, a key-position in Aragon, and the rebel commandant, Colonel Rey, surrendered. But the success of this offensive was short-lived, for in February 1938, Teruel was recaptured. In March 1938, a rebel advance was launched in Aragon. Barcelona was subjected to three days' intensive bombing, 815 inhabitants being killed and 2,200 wounded.<sup>1</sup> By April

<sup>1</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Year Book, 1939.

15 Franco's troops had reached the Mediterranean coast near Tortosa, thus driving in a wedge between Catalonia and Valencia. Although the Republicans maintained a valiant resistance it was evident that their final defeat was now only a matter of time. On June 15 Castellon fell. The Government attempted a diversion by launching a counter-offensive on the Ebro, but they were driven back owing to a hopeless shortage of supplies. On December 23, 1938, Franco opened his offensive against Catalonia. With an overwhelming superiority in aeroplanes, ammunition and artillery, and with—as we shall presently note—thousands of Italian and German forces, he captured Barcelona on January 26, 1939. A British cruiser landed a rebel officer on Minorca, the only Balearic island remaining loyal to the Government, in order to arrange for its capitulation, though, even during the course of these negotiations, Italian planes continued to bomb the island. On February 27 Britain and France gave unconditional recognition to Franco. On March 29, 1939, Franco's troops at last entered Madrid, and on the same day Valencia and the other Republican strongholds surrendered. The grim struggle was at an end.

### *Non-Intervention in Spain*

The Spanish war was an international event rather than a civil conflict, and it is important that we should appreciate its significance as part of the process of the European deterioration which had now set in. To some extent contemporary opinion recognised this significance: no local struggle could have aroused the same degree of controversy in foreign countries, nor could it have encouraged the flood of propaganda which poured out from both the Government and the rebel sides. Rebel propaganda relied mainly, as in the period immediately before the war, on stories of Red conspiracy, on the atheistic opinions of the extreme Left, and on stories of atrocities committed by Government supporters. Most Roman Catholics in England regarded General Franco's campaign as a crusade for Christianity, and this religious aspect of the controversy affected many Englishmen outside the Catholic fold.

This type of propaganda very effectually obscured the real issue. The world has long since grown familiar with the Fascist technique of excusing violent insurrection on the ground that the insurrection occurred just in time to prevent a Communist revolution. The same story was produced in the case of Spain, and the most relevant comment to be made upon it is that the Spanish revolutionaries must have been peculiarly inefficient at their job, for instead of launching a revolt they were caught entirely unawares by the rebels when the real revolt broke out. Moreover, at the beginning of the war, the Communists were a small party with a limited influence: the Anarchists formed a far larger organization, and the Anarchists were certainly unconnected with and indeed antagonistic to Moscow rule. In fact, the impression of the Government regime which this somewhat dishonest propaganda was intended to convey—and did convey to many Englishmen—was that of an orgy of revolt led by a wild extremist rabble which was determined to uproot the traditional culture of Spanish civilization. Actually, as all those who visited Government Spain discovered, the loyalist cause was administered and enthusiastically supported by normal men and women, by the middle-classes as well as by the proletariat, and by statesmen who were as concerned as any Englishman to preserve law and order. Life in Valencia, Barcelona and Madrid was as settled, despite war-conditions, as in any other European city. The terrorist elements were a minority and were gradually eliminated as the war proceeded. The Government mainly represented those whose outlook was liberal and who were desperately anxious to free their country from the reactionary influences which had flourished under the Church and aristocracy. The endeavour to provide education, even under the stress of war, and to introduce modern methods of agriculture was vigorously pursued. Education was not confined to children, for in the trenches Spanish soldiers had formed their own classes so as to learn to read and write. Along the coast from Valencia to Alicante schools which would have satisfied the most exacting educational tests were improvised to meet the needs of the children evacuated from the danger-zones. That this liberalising movement should have been coloured so largely with anti-clerical, and

to some extent with anti-religious sympathies is hardly to be wondered at by any who have followed the history of Spain. That the people throughout Government Spain, outside the Catholic Basque province, were content to see the churches closed, and that many of those priests who had been unable to join Franco's army were the victims of popular fury is some indication of the Church's record : in those rare cases where the clergy had confined themselves to pastoral work they were invariably unmolested.

The stories of hooligan atrocities which played so large a part in Catholic propaganda had more substance. But the rights and wrongs of the Spanish struggle must ultimately be determined by the aims for which each side were contending, and we must look beyond the immediate incidents of war and unrest to the fundamental issues at stake. Even if the Franco propaganda is considered at its face-value, its sincerity has heavily to be discounted. The worst outrages of which the Government forces were accused were excesses due to chaos and want of discipline : the crimes committed by Franco were, on the contrary, the result of calculated savagery. The Catholic 'crusade,' indeed, soon revealed itself as a campaign conducted with barbarous severity. Mr G. L. Steer, *The Times* correspondent, thus described the destruction of Guernica : "the whole town of 7,000 inhabitants, plus 3,000 refugees, was slowly and systematically pounded to pieces."<sup>1</sup> The fact that a claim was advanced by some Franco advocates that Guernica was destroyed and its inhabitants massacred by the Basques themselves is an illustration of the fantastic falsehoods to which the rebel apologists were compelled to resort. A document found in the possession of a captured rebel officer on July 28, 1936, is quoted by Koestler<sup>2</sup> as follows : "In order to safeguard the provinces occupied it is essential to instal a certain salutary terror into the population. . . . The panic experienced by the civil population along the enemy's line of retreat is a factor of the utmost importance in contributing towards the demoralization of the enemy troops. The experiences of the last war show that accidental destruction of enemy hospitals and ambulances has a highly demoralising effect on troops . . . In the event of any opposition on the part

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, April 28, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Spanish Testament*.

of the populace (after the entry into Madrid) the streets should be put under fire without any further parleying. In view of the fact that large numbers of women are fighting on the enemy side there should be no distinction of sex in such cases. The more ruthless we are, the more quickly shall we quell hostile opposition."

Whether that document was official or not, the maxims which it contained were faithfully observed. The German planes at Franco's service blotted out defenceless towns and villages. Old men, women and children, in the last stages of exhaustion tramping along the road from Malaga, were mowed down by German machine-guns. Basque priests and nuns were massacred from the air by their fellow-Catholics. Wherever the rebels advanced, and, indeed, after they had finally crushed Government resistance, thousands of men were lined up and shot for no other reason than that they were members of trade-unions or other loyalist organizations. When every allowance is made for the brutality of modern warfare, the methods of the Fascist-Catholic forces can only be described as bestial, and it is ironical that it should have been the perpetrators of such outrages who defended their case by pointing to the atrocities committed in the name of the Government.

It has been necessary to dwell at some length on the propaganda-controversies involved in the Spanish struggle since, to some extent, they affected the course of British foreign policy. Not only the Roman Catholics but a considerable element of the British governing-class were in sympathy with the Franco cause. Throughout the nineteenth century English sentiment had enthusiastically supported the attempts of foreign nations to free themselves from reaction. This body of opinion had expressed itself in no uncertain manner when Garibaldi fought for a united Italy or when Greece attempted to free herself from the Turkish yoke. But, though the Spanish struggle against Franco was a similar type of movement, no such sympathies were awakened, except in Left circles. British official policy and middle-class views were coloured by the suspicion that the cause of the Government was not quite respectable. There is some evidence that when British naval ships anchored in Government ports the men were not allowed ashore for fear that they would be contaminated by



revolutionary influences, whereas in rebel ports they were given the usual leave.

This tendency might have had no serious consequences had the Spanish conflict remained a local, civil war. But, as has already been stated, it was obvious from the first that the hostilities were to assume international proportions, and were to become, therefore, part of the process of the rapid deterioration of European security. Italian military assistance had been promised to the rebels, as we have seen, long before the rebellion broke out. This assistance was immediately forthcoming: by the beginning of 1937 there were at least 10,000 Italian Fascist militia fighting in Spain, and throughout the autumn of 1936 Nazi aeroplanes flown by their own pilots, in addition to vast stores of ammunition and heavy armament, were arriving both from Italy and Germany. On the Government side there were the foreign volunteers in the International Brigade, while ammunition and light armament was purchased mainly from Mexico and Czechoslovakia, and to a smaller extent from France. This assistance was, of course, no breach of neutrality, but it was frequently alleged that the Soviet Union was the first offender, and that Italy and Germany intervened only when Russian support had become formidable. The evidence for this claim is dubious: Russian assistance, in the form of planes and armaments, began to arrive no earlier than October 1936. Soviet assistance was, moreover, limited in quantity, the best proof of this being that the Spanish Government supporters perpetually reproached the Soviet Union for its lack of help. Whatever Moscow would have wished to do, the fact remains that, owing largely to difficulties of transport, her aid was slight compared to the contribution of Nazi-Fascist supplies and troops, and that it waned to vanishing point as the Soviet Union became convinced that the war was lost.

When the war broke out the Popular Front Government in France naturally found itself in political sympathy with the Spanish Government. Léon Blum assured Madrid that French support, short of actual military aid, would be forthcoming, and Vincent Auriol, Blum's lieutenant, in a private interview declared that 'France would see the matter through.' Immediately these promises became known the French Conservative forces mobilised their

opposition. The President imposed his veto, and the leading Radical members of the Government threatened immediate resignation. Blum capitulated, and on August 1, 1936, proposed, with the approval of the British Government, a policy of 'non-intervention.' The Non-Intervention Committee, on which Britain, France, Russia, Germany and Italy were represented—Portugal, who was already acting virtually as a supply-base for the rebels, refused to attend—met on September 9. It was agreed that, contrary to the custom of international law, the legitimate Government of Spain should receive no war material from foreign countries. In theory the purpose of this policy was praiseworthy enough, for it sought to prevent the disaster of world-war: in practice it proved to be farcical. British statesmen had not yet appreciated that in the case of Germany and Italy they were dealing with countries whose rulers had no sense of the ordinary civilised code of morals. While on August 19 the British Board of Trade revoked all licences for the export of arms, ammunition and aeroplanes to Spain, and on January 11, 1937, even placed a ban on the recruitment of volunteers, Italy and Germany continued shamelessly to pour troops and munitions into rebel territory. In April 1937, a control scheme was set up with observers on all merchantmen of the non-intervention powers to prevent the carriage of contraband goods. A naval patrol of British, French, German and Italian warships kept guard along the Spanish coast, although a loophole was left in the case of Portugal and the Canary Islands, both of which territories were exempted from control and were accordingly serving as the main avenues of rebel supplies.

In May 1937, the German Government alleged that her battleship the *Deutschland* had been bombed by Government planes, and retaliated by shelling Almeria and by then resigning from the control-scheme. She was persuaded to return, but immediately afterwards declared that her cruiser, the *Leipzig*, had been also attacked. Germany then invited Britain and France to join her in an attack on Valencia, but as both these Governments were becoming suspicious of Nazi claims this invitation was refused. Italy and Germany thereupon finally retired from the control-scheme.

By the summer of 1937 Italy was resorting to open

piracy in the Mediterranean. By August 6 no less than fourteen attacks by Italian submarines had been launched on British ships. H.M.S. *Hunter* was damaged by a mine, and on September 1 the *Woodford* was sunk by a torpedo. The British Government now acted vigorously. A conference was convened at Nyon on September 10, Germany being unrepresented and Italy refusing the invitation to attend. The French and British naval commands agreed to provide the necessary patrols, and, seeing that serious measures were at last to be undertaken, Italy on second thoughts agreed to co-operate. An ironical situation was thus created, Italy sitting on the tribunal as one of the judges pledged to stamp out her own crimes. For a time the Mediterranean became safer waters for legitimate merchant trade, but British and the neutral ships were deliberately attacked from the air when anchored in Spanish Government ports. By the close of 1937 there had been twenty-five attacks on British vessels, eight of them being ships of the Royal Navy. On June 21, 1938, Mr Chamberlain confessed in the House of Commons that it was impossible to protect British shipping in territorial waters without becoming involved in war—an eloquent testimony to the complete failure of non-intervention and an indication of the rapid decay of British prestige in Europe.

Mr Chamberlain's attempt to deny this aspect of his confession was not reassuring. Mr Noel-Baker asserted in the House on June 21, 1938, that of "140 British vessels engaged in trading with Spain during the past year, 10 had been sunk, 10 captured and detained, and 28 damaged more or less seriously. . . . Nearly sixty people have been killed and wounded," he asserted, "and . . . two non-intervention officers have been killed." To this record of piracy Mr Chamberlain's reply was that the owners of these ships were making "portentous profits," and that "people who take these risks must look after themselves." It is hardly surprising that this remark caused criticism from all quarters of the House. Lord Cecil declined the Government whip as a protest. In his letter of resignation he wrote: "It is admitted by the Prime Minister that the attacks were illegal, that in fact the British subjects killed were murdered. Yet the British Prime Minister declines to take any action, economic or military, to protect British lives and property.

... I do not believe that any other British Prime Minister has ever made a speech like that of Mr Chamberlain. It seems to me inconsistent with British honour and international morality."

By the close of 1937 the Non-Intervention Committee adopted a British proposal for a withdrawal of all foreign troops from both sides. The Spanish Government at once agreed to the plan, and withdrew the full complement of non-Spanish combatants, the total number of which was well under 10,000. Italy and Germany, on the contrary, adopted obstructive tactics, Italy, however, recalling 10,000 soldiers in November 1938, in order to bring into operation the Anglo-Italian agreement which had been signed earlier in the year. The terms of this agreement were unscrupulously broken by Italy, however, inasmuch as this evacuation was shown to be no more than a gesture: thousands of Italian troops remained in Spain until the end of the war, and there is some evidence to show that more men were landed even after the agreement had come into effect. That Franco had won, not by the rallying of Spaniards to his flag, but by Nazi-Fascist arms, was admitted by Marshal Goering who declared in June 1939 that "all the important victories of General Franco were obtained with the help of German volunteers (sic)."<sup>1</sup> At the conclusion of the war 17,000 German troops from Spain marched through Berlin and were welcomed by Hitler as having contributed to the triumph "over democracy and bolshevism." An Italian weekly review in a war-survey disclosed subsequently that from December 1936 to April 1937, 100,000 soldiers, 4,370 motor vehicles, 40,000 tons of war material, and 750 guns were sent from Italy to Spain. 5,099 Italian airmen and 312 civilian assistants had been contributed. The Italian air-force had carried out 5,318 bombardments and dropped 2,700 tons of bombs on Spanish towns and villages.<sup>2</sup> These imposing statistics, in spite of Mussolini's boasts as to the glorious exploit, of his mercenaries in Spain, must be balanced by the poor quality of the Italian army. The one serious offensive which the Italians conducted—on the Guadalajara front in March 1937—resulted in a sweeping victory for the Government and the capture of thousands of Italian prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Manchester Guardian*, June 9, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, June 9, 1939.

The aim of the Anglo-French policy was, as we have seen, to localise the struggle, and thus to avoid a European war. The practical effect of non-intervention was to ensure the defeat of the Spanish Government. Had the normal procedure been followed and the Republicans been thus enabled to purchase with the ample funds in their possession armaments from abroad, it is doubtful if Franco could have won. He owed his victory, indeed, partly to the poverty of loyalist equipment, the small numbers of their planes, and their failure to obtain any heavy artillery: when the German planes exterminated a working-class district in Madrid there were no anti-aircraft guns to challenge them. Partly he was victorious because of the lavish supplies with which Italy and Germany furnished him, while Britain and France were rigorously preventing any such help reaching the Government. Non-intervention may have been mainly inspired by the fear of an extension of the conflict, but it was also due to that fatal miscalculation, amounting to a twist of vision, which conditioned the Conservative Government in Britain throughout the whole of this period, so that, as we have already remarked, British statesmen looked always towards the Left as the source of danger, and turned their backs upon the real peril. They were unfavourably disposed, or at best indifferent, towards the Spanish Government. They believed that a loyalist victory would lead to a spread of Communism and that the Liberal elements would be submerged. It is true that the Communist Party grew in strength as the war developed, and that in the last desperate stages there was an open breach between the extremist and moderate elements. But, when we have allowed the maximum justification for these fears, the fact remains that Britain and France by their policy contributed to the creation of a Spain which was heavily indebted to the Axis Powers and which was therefore certain to prove a strategic menace to both countries. Germany and Italy had not enabled Franco to win for altruistic or merely ideological reasons: they wished to encircle France and threaten British interests in the Mediterranean. Had the reddest Government prevailed in Spain, the military situation in 1939 might have been far more favourable to the Allies.

But British statesmanship was blinded to such consider-

ations. The world-war, far from being averted, became more inevitable. And, meanwhile, a people who had struggled heroically to emancipate themselves from reaction saw these same forces re-establishing their grip. Franco might talk of a new regime, but the Catholic and aristocratic elements which had enlisted under his banner were determined that their privileges should be restored. The progressive elements were rounded up, imprisoned and shot. The black night of the ages settled once more over the face of Spain. The freedom for which these men and women had dared to hope was not as yet to be achieved.

### *The Rape of Austria*

Austria had become since 1919 a small country suffering from a deep political cleavage. In Vienna, which contained almost a third of the Austrian population, the Social Democrats were in power. The rural provinces were, however, Catholic, and both peasants and landowners were antagonistic to socialism. Their antagonism was both fundamental and founded on immediate grievances. The municipal Government had embarked on ambitious social reforms: it was paying pensions and unemployed insurance to the workers, it had established pre-natal clinics for women, and it had built modern blocks of flats for the artisans, probably the best working-class flats which the world had yet seen. But half the cost of these developments was paid out of provincial revenue. The rural population of the Viennese province were impatient towards a policy under which they were taxed for the benefit of the city-proletariat.

The Catholic Christian Social Party was accordingly determined to suppress this Socialist administration, and their hostility was fanned by the suspicion that the Socialists were no friends of the Church. As in Spain and elsewhere orthodox Catholic institutionalism stood solidly for conservatism, while the progressive forces recognised the Church as a definite obstruction in their path. The Austrian Catholics had behind them the armed forces of the Heimwehr, a Fascist army led by Prince Starhemberg and Major Fey. The Schutzbund, a democratic militia, supported

the Social Democrats. In 1927, the workers went on strike as a protest against the perpetual bias of the Courts in favour of the Heimwehr, whenever clashes occurred and the police prosecuted. In the course of the strike the police fired on the crowd, killing eighty-five workers and losing two of their own number.

- By 1933 a new political force had appeared on the scene.
- The Austrian Nazis smuggled arms over the German frontier and openly stood for the absorption of Austria in the German fatherland, on the authority of the *Mein Kampf* programme: whereas the Fascists looked to Italy for support, the Nazis were agents of the Reich.

On May 20, 1932, Dr Dollfuss was appointed Chancellor. He was a member of the Christian Social Party, a devout Catholic, and a man of peasant stock. By March 1933, he had suspended the constitution and had begun to rule as a dictator. But the immediate challenge to his authority came not from the Socialists but from the Nazis. The Nazis commenced a campaign of terrorism, adopting the approved German technique: the German wireless stations supported them by bitter criticism of the Dollfuss Government. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, and the German Nazis based their main criticism of Dollfuss' regime on the charge that he was destroying the democratic liberties of the people! Dollfuss at once retaliated. The police were instructed to keep a strict control over Nazi activities, and when Dr Frank, the Bavarian Minister of Justice, visited Austria he was forbidden to make political speeches. Hitler at once imposed a tax of 1,000 marks on German subjects crossing the frontier, a measure which effectually damaged the tourist trade on which Austria largely relied. In June 1933, Dollfuss suppressed the Austrian Nazi Party.

The Social Democrats possessed a keen enough political awareness to recognise that the Nazis were a far deadlier enemy than the Heimwehr. In these circumstances they decided to offer their support to Dollfuss in preserving Austrian independence. But Dollfuss refused their offer. He was far too conditioned by his personal traditions to consent even to a temporary alliance with the Left. It was Italy to whom he looked for help, and it so happened that at this time Mussolini's relations with Hitler were not of a

friendly character. Mussolini therefore promised aid, but with the proviso that Dollfuss should suppress the Social Democrats. Dollfuss was more than willing to pay this price, and on February 12, 1934, provoked hostilities against the workers. The excuse given by the Government for this deliberate attack was, in the words of von Schuschnigg, the Vice-Chancellor, that "a number of fanatics, actuated by party spirit . . . obstinately determined to seize supreme power in a State which they were not otherwise prepared to serve." But this excuse must be read in the light of the Dollfuss-Mussolini negotiations, and it is significant that once more the familiar story of an imminent bolshevik plot was produced. As usual, there was no evidence of any such seditious activity. "When the Red outburst was timed to break," writes John Mackintosh,<sup>1</sup> "the leaders were to be found drinking coffee in a public restaurant, or going off on holiday, or playing at home with their children."

The battle of Vienna lasted three days. The workers' flats became fortresses which 500 Schutzbunders heroically defended. The Government had to use an army of 19,000 men equipped with machine-guns, field-guns, and armoured cars, to break down this last resistance. Nine of the Socialist leaders were hanged, and over a thousand men and women were killed in the fighting. Dollfuss had won his victory over the workers, but he had sealed his own doom.

The year 1934 opened with a declaration by Hitler that "the assertion that the German Reich plans to coerce the Austrian State is absurd and cannot be substantiated or proved." The insincerity of this utterance was exposed in the following July. The Nazis broke into the Vienna Chancellery and murdered Dollfuss in cold blood: he was left to bleed to death, no doctor or priest being permitted to minister to him. The Nazi rising, however, was abortive. Mussolini dispatched three divisions to the Austrian frontier. Hitler's plans were checked, and he accordingly dissociated himself from any responsibility for the revolt. It should be noted, however, that when the Nazis subsequently conquered Austria, the two criminals who had murdered Dollfuss were acclaimed by the German leaders as heroes and martyrs.



For a while peace reigned. On May 21, 1935, Hitler again declared that Germany "neither wished nor intended to interfere with the domestic affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, or to conclude an *anschluss*." A formal treaty on these lines was signed on July 11, 1936, by von Papen and Schuschnigg, who had succeeded Dollfuss. All its terms were violated by Germany less than two years later.

- In February 1938, changes took place in German military and diplomatic circles which indicated that a more aggressive policy was contemplated. Von Ribbentrop was appointed to the Foreign Office, and Marshal von Blomberg with General von Fritsch were removed from their army posts. On the 12th of the same month Hitler summoned Schuschnigg to Berchtesgaden, and apparently Schuschnigg was subjected to terrible humiliations: he is supposed to have warned his colleagues that he might never return to Austria. On February 20 Hitler made the most violent speech which he had as yet uttered, delivering a special attack on Anthony Eden, who was now the British Foreign Secretary, and declaring that under no circumstances would Germany ever re-enter the League. Similar attacks had been made during the previous week on Mr Eden by the Italian press. No worse impression could therefore have been created than that caused by the resignation of Mr Eden, which occurred on the very day of Hitler's speech. The official explanation was that Eden disagreed with Mr Chamberlain's policy of entering into a pact with Italy: but the conclusion drawn, particularly abroad, was that the British Government had bowed in this matter to the wishes of the two dictators and had thrown its Foreign Secretary to the wolves. Eden was certainly convinced that Mussolini's breach of faith over Spanish non-intervention rendered any attempt at compromise singularly unwise: he was also influenced by Chamberlain's refusal to join with France in an effort to prevent Austrian annexation. Lord Cranborne, Mr Eden's Under-Secretary, who also resigned at this time, expressed himself more vigorously. "Conversations with Italy now," he said, "would not be a contribution to peace but a surrender to blackmail."

Two days later Mr Chamberlain asked the House of Commons whether anyone believed that "the League as constituted to-day can afford collective security. The

situation has completely changed since the last election. . . . We must not try to delude small and weak nations into thinking that they will be protected by the League against aggression when we know that nothing of the kind can be expected. I still have faith that the League may be reconstituted. I doubt very much whether the League will ever do its best work as long as its members are nominally bound to impose sanctions or to use force in support of obligations." This speech was obviously of critical importance, for it revealed that the Conservative Government was now resolved openly to abandon a League policy. Chamberlain's declaration was also, in view of what was already known as to Germany's Austrian plans, in effect, an encouragement to Hitler to go straight ahead: it indicated in unmistakable terms that Austria must look for no help from Britain. In this respect it is significant that *The Times* of November 29, 1937, had already hinted in a leading article that union with the Reich might well be in Austria's best interests. Leading articles in *The Times* are not wholly 'uninspired,' and this article may have been designed either as an attempt to test opinion, or as a warning of the lengths to which the Chamberlain Government were prepared to go in the cause of appeasement, lengths which involved no less than a complete reversal of Britain's previous attitude on the Austrian issue. In this connexion it may be remembered that, following a visit from Lord Halifax, who had succeeded Mr Eden, Hitler is understood to have told the Austrian Chancellor that Britain was in full agreement with Germany's plan regarding Austria and Czechoslovakia. It is conceivable, in view of *The Times* article, that, although this statement was made by Hitler, it may have contained an element of truth.

The Austrian Nazis now became more daring in their terrorist activities. On March 9, 1938, Schuschnigg announced that there would be a general plebiscite on the 13th to decide the future fate of Austria and that he would faithfully abide by the result. Hitler immediately denounced the proposal to hold a plebiscite as unconstitutional, and demanded Schuschnigg's resignation. German troops were mobilised on the frontier, and Schuschnigg surrendered. Dr Seyss-Inquart became Chancellor and dispatched a telegram to Hitler, asking for German troops to restore

order. There was, of course, no sign of public disorder, apart from the excesses of the Nazis: the working-classes and all Left elements, ignoring Nazi provocation and insults, stood resolutely in support of the Government, in spite of the persecution which they had suffered at its hands. Schuschnigg broadcast a last despairing message to the Austrian nation on March 11, explaining that his resignation was due to his desire to avoid bloodshed, and describing the reports that the Government had lost control as a complete lie. On the following day Hitler entered Austria in triumph. Hundreds of 'planes roared overhead, tanks and armoured cars paraded the streets of Vienna, and the German troops poured across the frontier. The hideous features of Nazi rule were instantly reproduced. Schuschnigg and other members of the fallen Government were captured and sent to prison. Several thousands of Royalists, Catholics, Socialists and Jews were subjected to the same fate. Vienna became the scene of unrestrained brutality, young Nazi roughs rounding up political suspects and compelling elderly Jews to perform humiliating tasks in the public streets. Jewish homes were pillaged, and many of these victims were beaten to the state of exhaustion. Seven thousand of them committed suicide. Freud, the famous psychologist, and other men of international scientific repute, were imprisoned on the sole charge that they were non-Aryan.

Under the whip of the Storm Troopers a plebiscite was held on April 10, and, as was inevitable under these conditions, 99 per cent. of the votes were cast for Hitler. To vote against Hitler meant death or torture. The Jews were forbidden to vote.

The horror of these outrages and this further revelation of Hitler's unscrupulous methods caused a severe shock in European circles. Mussolini had apparently been caught unawares, but subsequently received a telegram from Hitler "explaining that the Austrian invasion had been necessary in the interests of "legitimate national defence," and adding the assurance that the Brenner would be respected by Germany as an inviolable frontier. Czechoslovakia was also seriously alarmed, but Field-Marshal Goering informed the Czech minister in Berlin that Germany had no hostile intentions of any kind towards the Prague Government:

he gave this pledge on 'his word of honour.' Shortly afterwards Baron von Neurath announced that Germany would remain entirely loyal to the German - Czechoslovakian Arbitration Convention of October 1925.

It is impossible to disregard the similarity between Nazi behaviour in the field of diplomacy and in actual practice with the methods of American gangsterdom. There was, however, one important difference. The leaders of the American underworld never prefaced their acts of criminal violence with professions that they would not resort to violence. They never pledged themselves by solemn utterances to respect the law. The Nazi declarations that no attempt would be made by Germany to violate the independence of Czechoslovakia were, however, a sure indication that she had already been marked down as the next victim. She had not long to wait.

## CHAPTER 6

### MUNICH—AND THE EVE OF WAR

#### *The Policy of Appeasement*

BEFORE we turn to the tragic story of Czechoslovakia it may be well to examine more closely the trend and the underlying purpose of the Chamberlain policy which culminated at Munich. Mr Chamberlain has been accused by his more extreme critics of deliberate Fascist sympathies, and of actually conspiring to assist Hitler, on condition that his offensive was directed eastwards against the Soviet Union. Stories had begun to circulate in 1938 of groups of prominent people with whom Mr Chamberlain was said to be associated and who, it was suspected, had close affinities with Nazi and Fascist aims. Of these groups the most notorious was nicknamed the 'Cliveden set,' owing to the fact that they met, at the invitation of Lady Astor, at Cliveden House in Buckinghamshire. Lord Londonderry, the late Lord Lothian, Lord Swinton and Mr Garvin were reputed to belong to this circle, and it was stated that Lord Halifax, Sir John Simon and Sir Samuel Hoare had attended some of the week-end discussions.

It is necessary to regard these stories with caution, but it is beyond doubt that there were at this time in England several pro-Nazi groups and societies which the Germans fully exploited and which consisted of men and women who for sentimental or political reasons believed that it was desirable at almost any cost to cultivate friendly relations with Germany, and that it was practicable to do so. There is, indeed, plenty of evidence, which has never been denied, showing that Neville Chamberlain and his colleagues were deliberate in their intentions to do nothing which should antagonise the Fascist forces. Mr Geoffrey Mander and Sir Archibald Sinclair, for example, quoted in June 1938 in the House an article in *The Montreal Star* which reported Mr Chamberlain as having used the following words in an interview arranged by Lady Astor with American journalists: "Perhaps the most dangerous spot in the world is Czechoslovakia. What do the British in authority

think about it? These British think there is little danger of immediate war in Europe. . . . Nothing seems clearer than that the British do not expect to fight for Czechoslovakia and do not anticipate that France or Russia will either. That being so, then the Czechs must accede to the German demands, if reasonable. . . . It is admitted that Britain would like to swing Germany and Italy into a working agreement with Britain and France to keep the peace of Europe. Soviet Russia is excluded on the ground that it does not work well in harness, with a proviso that some day Russia, if she behaves, may also be admitted to membership."

Questioned in the House as to the accuracy of this highly dangerous statement of British policy, Chamberlain replied with some irritation: "I am not going to attempt to deny or to affirm anything in connexion with a statement in this paper or a statement in any other paper." Lady Astor at first asserted that there was "not a word of truth" in the story that this interview took place at a luncheon given by her for the purpose of enabling Chamberlain to disclose to representatives of the American press the nature of the Government's foreign policy. But on June 27 she made a personal explanation in which the following admissions occur: "I never had any intention of denying that the Prime Minister had attended a luncheon at my house. The Prime Minister did so attend, the object being to enable some American journalists who had not met him to do so informally and thus to make his acquaintance. What I did deny and still deny is the suggestion that what took place on this particular occasion was an interview." Lady Astor proceeded to define what in her opinion constitutes and what does not constitute an 'interview,' but such explanations are hardly of relevance in a historical record.

In this connexion it should be noted that, on Mr Eden's resignation, Mr Lennox-Boyd, an avowed supporter of General Franco, was appointed Under-Secretary to the Minister of Labour. In a speech at Biggleswade he was reported by *The Times*<sup>1</sup> to have said that he "could countenance nothing more ridiculous than a guarantee that the frontiers of Czechoslovakia should not be violated, when half the people in that country could not be relied upon to

<sup>1</sup> March 19, 1938.

be loyal to the Government of the day, and from what he knew of Mr Chamberlain he did not think he would make a move to give a guarantee of that kind. Germany could absorb Czechoslovakia, and Great Britain would remain secure." When questions were asked in the House on March 21 as to the authenticity of this remarkable speech, Mr Chamberlain replied that the report was incorrect. On being pressed by Mr Attlee for a definite statement that this speech, as reported, did not represent the Government's views, the Prime Minister, however, refused to respond.

The Government outlook, as represented by Chamberlain who dominated its foreign policy, was simple enough. Chamberlain believed that the critical dangers of the situation could be avoided if the four great Powers co-operated, and that co-operation with Germany and Italy was possible: these Governments might be domineering in their tendencies, but the price of co-operation with them was, if peace were maintained, well worth while. This policy meant an entire renunciation of League principles, for past and possibly future acts of aggression on the part of the dictators would have to be condoned. If Hitler decided to press eastwards and involve himself in a struggle with the Soviet Union over the Ukraine, that might, indeed, prove beneficial in finally ridding the world of the Communist menace. It is not without significance that when the Soviet Union, immediately after the Austrian invasion, proposed that a conference of the peace-minded Powers should be held in order to consider what measures should be taken to deter the aggressor, Mr Chamberlain's reply in the House on March 24 was that "the Soviet proposal would appear to involve less a consultation with a view to settlement than a concerting of action against an eventuality that has not yet arisen (sic). . . . His Majesty's Government are of opinion that the indirect but none the less inevitable consequence of such action as is proposed by the Soviet Government would be to aggravate the tendency towards the establishment of exclusive groups of nations which must, in the view of the Government, be inimical to the prospects of European peace."

The Chamberlain policy rested essentially on the assumption that both Hitler and Mussolini were, beneath

all their blustering, men of honour whose word could be trusted: they could be relied upon, if carefully treated, not to turn and bite the hands of their friends. It is evident that both Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax at this stage did actually believe this. The Anglo-Italian pact was described as a 'gentlemen's agreement,' and on March 24, 1938, Mr Chamberlain stated in the House that the British Government placed "full reliance upon the intention of the Italian Government to make good their assurances." Sir Archibald Sinclair took the opportunity in this debate of reminding the Premier that Italy had also given an assurance that there would be no breach of the non-intervention agreement, but had nevertheless flagrantly violated the terms of that agreement. Once again, Mr Chamberlain made no comment.

There remained the difficult problem of Czechoslovakia, which was known to be the immediate German objective and whose independence was guaranteed under treaty both by France and the Soviet Union.

### *Nazi pressure on Czechoslovakia*

Czechoslovakia had become a remarkably successful liberal democracy under the wise statesmanship of Masaryk and Benes. She rapidly became one of the foremost industrial States in Europe. She exported coal, textiles, porcelain, chemicals and glass. The Skoda works at Pilsen were the largest European ammunition factories outside Germany. Although her jurisdiction comprised Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Jews and a few other smaller minorities, there appeared to be no serious political disunity. The one source of discontent lay in the German population. The Sudeten Germans had lived with the Czechs under Austro-Hungarian rule for seven hundred years—they had never formed part of Germany: but under the Austrian imperial regime they had enjoyed the privileges of a ruling race. Under the Czechoslovak State their position was reversed, and conditions thus became favourable for the formation of a discontented German Nationalist party. Some twenty-one complaints were forwarded to the League of Nations, indicating that there was a certain amount of



friction between the Czechs and the German minority. Separation from Czechoslovakia had never as yet, however, formed part of the Sudeten German programme.

In May 1938, not more than two months after the annexation of Austria, and less than two months after the German assurances of friendliness towards the Prague Government, German troops were massed on the frontier, and an invasion of Czechoslovakia was expected in the early hours of the 21st. The Czechs, however, manned their frontier with great efficiency, and both France and the Soviet Union announced that they would fulfil their pledges if German troops commenced hostilities. On this occasion the British ambassador in Berlin was instructed to draw the attention of the German Government to the obligations which Britain would incur if France carried out her pledge. The effect was immediate: Hitler withdrew his troops.

On June 3 and June 14 *The Times* published articles which were 'feelers' of much the same type as had been tried out in the case of Austria: it was suggested that the solution of the problem might be found in the cession of the Sudeten areas to the Reich. Meanwhile, several Nazi officials visited London. Konrad Henlein, the Sudeten leader, who was already known to be acting directly under the orders of Hitler, crossed to England in May and explained to Mr Churchill and Sir Robert Vansittart that he was really a 'moderate' and that his public demands were not to be taken literally. Captain Wiedemann, Hitler's confidential envoy, arrived in July and was received both by Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. It was understood that he conveyed a message from Hitler of his willingness to confer as to a Four-Power pact once the Czechoslovakian issue was settled. Lord Halifax thereupon paid a visit to Paris, apparently to sound the French Government as to their attitude to the British proposal to dispatch Lord Runciman to Prague as an 'arbitrator.' The Czechs and the French rejected this proposal on the grounds that it would merely encourage Henlein to raise his terms.

Before the close of the parliamentary session Lord Runciman had been dispatched to Prague as a 'mediator,' "in response," Mr Chamberlain declared, "to a request from the Czechoslovakian Government." There is no documentary evidence of any kind to support the accuracy

of this assertion. At the time of Lord Runciman's arrival the position which had been reached in the dispute was that Henlein's Eight Points, enunciated at Karlsbad on April 24, held the field: if adopted they would have meant the creation of a Nazi State within Czechoslovakia. *The Times* described them as proposals "which no Government could accept." The Czechs had offered to put into operation measures which would give the Germans increased nationality rights.

It was into this atmosphere of rapidly hardening controversy—the Prague Government vainly endeavouring to arrive at a settlement, and Henlein, acting under Hitler's directions and determined that no settlement should be reached—that Lord and Lady Runciman were precipitated. Their social-political affinities were hardly such as to suggest that they would be able to contact the realities of the situation. They were the frequent guests of the German landowners who disliked the Prague Government's land-reforms, they were closely in touch with Princess Hohenlohe, who was supposed to be Hitler's emissary: they seemed to have regarded the Czechs as an interesting but not very civilised people. Lord Runciman's first effort was to persuade the Czech Government to accept the so-called Third Plan, under which the country would have been divided, on the Swiss model, into a number of autonomous cantons. The Czechs accepted this Plan on August 21, and added to their acceptance the announcement that they would appoint Sudeten Germans to a number of official posts in their own region. Henlein's reply was to issue a manifesto (August 26) complaining that violent attacks had been made on the German population by the Czechs, and inviting Germans to carry arms and to "act in self-defence when attacked." The charge that 'incidents' of this nature had occurred was repeated continually by Henlein's supporters. *The Times* considered that these stories were "distorted out of all resemblance to the facts, and some seem to have been invented" (August 30).

Lord Runciman, however, urged Henlein to pay a visit to Hitler on September 1 and to take with him a personal message, to which Hitler, incidentally, vouchsafed no reply.

Lord Runciman thereupon applied, with the approval of Mr Chamberlain, what the Czech Deputy-Premier

described as "tremendous pressure" to induce the Government to propose a Fourth Plan (September 6), virtually conceding the Eight Points of Karlsbad. The British and French Governments officially approved this Plan, and Lord Runciman publicly expressed the view that the Plan "embodied almost all the requirements of Karlsbad." The Sudeten Nazis, however, through one of their spokesmen, declared that the Karlsbad Points were "only the beginning of the settlement."

At this juncture *The Times* followed up its suggestions of June 3 and 14 by a leading article on September 7 which caused consternation in political circles, and which forced the Foreign Office to issue a statement denying that the article represented the policy of the British Government. "It might be worth while," *The Times* remarked, "for the Czech Government to consider the project which has found favour in some quarters, of making Czechoslovakia a more homogeneous State by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race." This proposal went further even than the demands which Hitler through Henlein was at the moment presenting, and lent substance to the suspicions that the 'Cliveden set,' of which both the proprietor and editor of *The Times* were members, was taking an active hand in these political developments. The Nazi policy, meanwhile, was to prevent any settlement being reached until Hitler had spoken at the Nazi congress at Nuremberg. Accordingly, further 'incidents' were alleged to have occurred at Moravska Ostrava and at Eger, disturbances which were unquestionably drunken brawls instigated by the Nazis themselves. Mr Chamberlain refused the Labour demand that Parliament should meet to discuss this critical situation. On September 12 Hitler delivered his speech. He charged the western democracies, and Britain in particular, with attempts to obstruct settlement. He demanded that the Sudeten Germans should be given "the free right of self-determination which every other nation also possesses"; and he concluded with the open threat that if the Sudeteners "cannot obtain rights and assistance by themselves they can obtain both from us."

The speech had evidently been pre-arranged as the signal for revolt. Bands of hooligan young Henleinists beat

up the poorer Jewish shops in the Sudeten areas, looted the fashionable shops, broke windows and fired their rifles. At Eger twenty-one persons were killed and seventy-five wounded, Czech officials and policemen figuring largely among the casualties. The Prague Government at once imposed martial law in the district, and as *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent reported, the effect was instantaneous: "the storm-troopers with their swastika armlets vanished like magic." The success of these rigorous measures should be noted, inasmuch as the Nazi propaganda was insisting that the Czech police were unable to keep order.

During September there were indications that the Henlein conspiracy was weakening. On September 14 the Henlein party issued a demand for the cession of the Sudeten area to Germany, coupled with a declaration that all Sudeten Germans were absolved from the duty of remaining loyal to the Czechoslovakian State. This was sheer treason, and the Prague Government immediately replied by ordering a suppression of the Henlein Party. The following day it was evident that these measures had been effectual. Two of the prominent supporters of Henlein, Kundt and Sebekowsky, announced their intention of forming a new and more moderate Sudeten party. The Catholic and Agrarian Parties in the Sudeten declared that they would now negotiate with the Government on the basis of the Fourth Plan.

It was at this juncture that Mr Chamberlain decided to fly by aeroplane to interview Hitler personally.

### *The Munich-crisis*

Looking back on these momentous events it is possible now to appreciate that the psychological effect of Mr Chamberlain's decision was certain to be disastrous on so neurotic a person as Hitler. The fact that the Premier of one of the most powerful European States, that very State which had defeated Germany in 1918, was now flying to see him—almost it must have seemed, in the role of suppliant—went to his head like strong wine. Had the interview been arranged on neutral soil, the alcoholic effect might have been mitigated. Under the circumstances an arrangement

to meet outside Germany would have, no doubt, been impossible, but, as it was, Hitler who had always laboured under a sense of inferiority, was elated by this fresh proof that he had become the storm-centre of the world.

Hitler received Mr Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden on September 15 with every courtesy: English tea was awaiting the Premier in his hotel. The conversations, through the medium of an interpreter, began at once. Chamberlain does not appear to have gone to Hitler in order to lay before him any definite proposals: he wished simply to learn at first hand what Hitler was determined to claim. This negative attitude on the part of Chamberlain placed Hitler in an advantageous position. According to Chamberlain's own account "Herr Hitler made it plain that he had made up his mind that the Sudeten Germans must have the right of self-determination and of returning (sic), if they wished, to the Reich. If they could not achieve this by their own efforts, he said, he would assist them to do so. . . . My visit alone prevented an invasion for which everything was ready." Mr Chamberlain flew back to London on the following day, to be met with a personal report from Lord Runciman that in his view the cession of Sudeten territory was inevitable, and "should be done promptly."

During this week-end of September 17-18 the French Cabinet was in constant session. The Paris Government was in a state of acute alarm, and highly susceptible, therefore, to the social and political influence which was brought to bear on them by the financiers, and, in particular by M. Flandin, whose sympathies could already be reckoned as definitely pro-Nazi. The Foreign Minister, M. Bonnet, is suspected of having concealed from the Cabinet certain passages in a report from General Gamelin to the effect that the French army was 'absolutely certain of victory if war was unhappily to occur.' *The Manchester Guardian*<sup>1</sup> published a report that Bonnet "at a particularly critical moment had given a wrong conception of the part Russia would have played, had France made up her mind to defend Czechoslovakia." The British Cabinet was similarly persuaded that Russia would be unable to help effectively by a confidential report by Colonel Lindbergh on the condition of the Russian Air Force. Lindbergh's subse-

<sup>1</sup> September 22, 1938.

quent record shows that a more prejudiced witness could hardly have been selected, and it is amazing that the British Cabinet should have failed to realise that such a report, of its very nature, could have no more value than the most superficial journalesse gossip: whatever the condition of the Soviet air-arm, no foreigner—and least of all one who was so politically sympathetic with Germany—would have been allowed by the Soviet authorities to acquire such highly confidential information.

On this fateful Sunday, September 18, 1938, the British and French Cabinets reached agreement by acceding to Hitler's Berchtesgaden demands. The 'Anglo-French Plan' proposed the transfer to Germany of all districts containing over 50 per cent. Germans, as well as the renunciation of the Franco-Czech and Soviet-Czech treaties in order that they should be replaced by "an international guarantee" whose nature was unspecified. M. Daladier is known to have been influenced largely by Lord Runciman's report, which advocated that there should be no plebiscite, on the highly dubious ground that it would be a "sheer formality: a very large majority of the inhabitants desire amalgamation with Germany." Lord Lloyd, in the House of Lords on October 4, stated that on the contrary "in the view of the experts, 75 or 80 per cent. of the Sudeten Germans would prefer autonomous treatment within the Czech State than to be handed over to Germany." *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* correspondents were daily supplying evidence to the same effect.

It was now necessary to compel the Prague Government to accept this Plan, and thus surrender completely to Hitler. This marks the darkest hour in the process of degradation to which Chamberlain now found himself committing his country; for there is no escape from the unpleasant reality that Britain and France were at this stage acting as agents for carrying out Hitler's demands. Most of the United States and Dominions press were outspoken in their criticism. "Such a solution," *The New York Times* declared, "is bound to spread war instead of peace." Nor was the manner in which this task was carried out either dignified or conciliatory. President Benes was roused from his bed at 2 a.m. to receive the British and French ministers. The Czech Cabinet was summoned a few hours later. It was

informed peremptorily by Britain and France that if these terms were refused "Czechoslovakia would be branded as responsible for all consequences which might follow." France also gave notice that, if war resulted, she "would not fulfil her obligations." Faced with this ultimatum the Czech Government surrendered. Her only remaining ally was the Soviet Union. Russia had repeated officially through M. Litvinov at Geneva that she would assist Czechoslovakia to her utmost capacity, if France would fulfil her share of the treaty-obligation. Ex-President Benes subsequently stated that the Soviet Union had offered help even if the French failed to honour their pledges: but he had felt that if the sole help given came from Russia the Nazi agitators would be able to declare that Czechoslovakia had become a Communist menace.

The Czech Government capitulated to what it described as "unbelievable pressure." "Our Allies and friends," the members of the Government declared, "have dictated to us sacrifices without parallel in history." On Thursday, September 22, Chamberlain flew to Godesberg to tell Hitler that he had been successful in his mission of compelling Czechoslovakia to accept Hitler's terms. Hitler is supposed to have expressed surprise that Mr Chamberlain had so successfully carried out his task. But Chamberlain had failed to realise that once a victim has surrendered to the blackmailer's demands, his troubles, far from ending, have begun. To Chamberlain's dismay, Hitler was not satisfied but announced far more sweeping claims, namely that many areas beyond the Sudetenland should immediately be occupied by German troops, and that all arms, goods and fortifications in these areas should be handed over intact to the invaders. These proposals, a Czech note declared, "go far beyond what we agreed to in the so-called Anglo-French Plan. They deprive us of every safeguard for our national existence." Faced with this new crisis Mr Chamberlain broke off the negotiations and warned Hitler that the democracies would be unable to tolerate these further claims. An official note was sent to Prague stating that "the French and British Governments cannot continue to take the responsibility of advising Czechoslovakia not to mobilise." The Czech mobilization was carried out rapidly and efficiently, and the country prepared with grim resolution

to meet the onslaught of war. German storm-troopers were reported by *The Times*<sup>1</sup> to have crossed the frontier, "masquerading as Sudeten Germans," kidnapping 200 men marked down on their secret lists, and transporting them to German soil. During this week-end and the following days, September 24-28, gas-masks were distributed in London, trenches were dug and a cloud of acute tension overhung the towns and countryside both of France and Britain. Profiteering in the articles required for this hurried war-preparation immediately broke out: the price of pick-axes, for instance, rose from 3s. to 10s. and sandbags which had cost 1½d. were now priced at 10d. On Monday the 26th Hitler spoke at the Sports Palace in Berlin, his speech consisting mainly of vulgar denunciations of the personal character of President Benes and bawling complaints that the Germans in Czechoslovakia were being subjected to fearful persecution and must instantly be delivered. "Czechoslovakia," he shouted, "is conceived as a lie, and conducted as a swindle—and the father of the lie is Benes. . . . Germans by the thousands and tens of thousands are put in prison and . . . mown down . . . Benes, the liar, must keep his word—within four days." This performance of insane ranting suggested that Hitler was no longer in a mood to be moved by rational considerations, and a statement was hurriedly issued by the British Foreign Office that if "a German attack is made upon Czechoslovakia the immediate result must be that France will be bound to come to her assistance, and Britain and Russia will certainly stand by France." Yet on October 5, the Soviet Union officially declared that neither France nor Britain had once consulted with her or proposed a draft of any sort of agreement. The only communications sent to the Soviet Government were reports of "accomplished facts." Lord De La Warr discussed the position with M. Litvinov, after his declaration at Geneva that Russia would fulfil her pledges to Czechoslovakia. But there was no contact whatever between Lord Halifax and the Soviet ambassador until the morning of the final day of the crisis, September 28.

On Tuesday evening, September 27, Mr Chamberlain broadcast to the nation. His tone was that of a weary man.

<sup>1</sup> September 22, 1938.



"I see nothing further that I can usefully do in the way of mediation," he said. His reference to the Czechs could hardly have been more deplorable. "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is," he exclaimed, "that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing!"

Next day, Wednesday, September 28, the House met for a full-dress debate. Not only in the Labour Party and among the Liberals was indignation seething as to the degree to which the Czechs had already been sacrificed, but it was expected that there would be a Conservative revolt and that the Government might even be defeated. Massed crowds paraded Whitehall shouting protests against the betrayal of Czech independence. Mr Chamberlain rose in this tense atmosphere to explain that in the early hours of that morning he had sent the following message to Hitler: "I feel certain that you can get all essentials without war and without delay." Mr Chamberlain, who was apparently unconscious that he was making a very serious admission, since this last-moment appeal to Hitler was so worded as to be fraught with highly dangerous implications, recounted the events of the past few days, but had said nothing so far which allayed the fears and the indignation of the Opposition and of a considerable number of the Conservative members. Suddenly it was observed that Lord Halifax, who was listening in the Peers' Gallery, had been handed a telegram. He read it and sent it down to the Prime Minister. Mr Chamberlain paused in his speech, read the wire, and then announced to the House that an invitation at this eleventh hour had been sent to him to attend a conference with Hitler and Mussolini at Munich, and that obviously he must respond by leaving for Germany at once. It was a highly dramatic moment. The House instantly realised the immediate implication of this message. War had been averted: it was peace. Members rose from their seats and cheered wildly, Socialists as well as Liberals and Conservatives. Some of them made no effort to restrain their tears. In this hysterical atmosphere of overpowering relief all criticism was stilled. The House adjourned. The crowds outside which were waiting to register their angry protests found themselves completely checkmated: there

was no House in session against which to protest. Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal leader, afterwards explained that both he and Mr Attlee felt that in such a situation it would have been impossible to continue the debate and offer their criticism. The chief actor in the tragic drama had already made his exit from the chamber.

Some attempt has been made to prove that this incident had been entirely pre-arranged and that the invitation to Munich had been received before the debate commenced. It is claimed that some of the Italian papers on the previous evening had published the news that the Munich conference was to be held, and that the Government must therefore have been aware by the morning of Wednesday of this new development. If this was indeed theatrical stagecraft, to enable the Government to escape defeat, the machinations were extraordinarily astute. But there is no evidence which compels us to impute such flagrant dishonesty to the Cabinet statesmen. The actual explanation is that, although efforts had been made to arrange the conference, Hitler's assent had not been received. It is true, however, that sinister moves were on foot through the medium of Bonnet and Flandin. Bonnet on Tuesday had instructed the French ambassador in Berlin to propose to Hitler an extension of the Anglo-French Plan on the lines of the Godesberg ultimatum.

On the next day, Thursday the 29th, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier concluded the Munich agreement. The one qualification of the Godesberg demands conceded by Hitler was that the German army was to occupy the surrendered territory not in one, but in ten days: it is doubtful whether military invasion could have been accomplished in one day, so that the most that can be claimed for this concession is that it avoided a possible clash between the advancing and retreating troops, and that it gave an eleventh-hour opportunity to the Czech population to flee from the approaching Nazi terror. The seizure of Czech territory was to take place on October 1, all Czech industrial plants and fortifications in the area to be handed over intact. All questions of evacuation, fixing frontiers, etc., were to be decided by a commission composed of representatives of the four Powers and one Czech member. Under this agreement the Schoeber line fortifications, which had cost

- the Czechs £50,000,000, the Skoda arms factory and the Aussig chemical works were surrendered in their entirety. Germany acquired over 50 per cent. of the Czech coal mines, 39 per cent. of the native metal industry, 55 per cent. of the glass industry, one quarter of the chemical industry, most of the brown coal areas, fourteen out of the twenty-seven major towns in Czechoslovakia, and one-third of the
- Czechoslovakian industrial population.

The Czech representatives at Munich were never consulted as to these terms : they were kept waiting in an ante-room until summoned to be told that their President was to be given two hours in which to accept the ultimatum. Hitler and Mussolini had left the conference when the Czech representatives were ushered in.

Mr Chamberlain returned to Heston evidently under the impression that he had scored a great diplomatic triumph, and he must have been confirmed in this impression by the reactions of the British public. Daladier was less confident, and is said to have been uncertain when from his own aeroplane he saw the crowds assembled, whether they had come to applaud or to mob him. The reaction of the public was natural, for they had been brought to the very precipice of war. In the first flush of rejoicing that the disaster had been averted they did not stop to consider that peace had been bought for them by sacrificing the freedom of a people who had created for themselves one of the most progressive and democratic States in Europe. The church bells of England rang and masses of people cheered Mr Chamberlain as he drove back to Westminster. He waved a piece of paper before them, and announced that the Fuehrer and he had agreed never to resort to war in any dispute between Germany and Britain. It means "peace for our time," he assured the crowds.

Within a few days, however, the British nation had begun to recover from this emotional outburst and to appreciate more dispassionately the effects of the Munich deal. Press publicity attempts to present Mr Chamberlain as a national hero waned, and a film describing his life-story was hurriedly withdrawn. The controversy which was awakened by Munich became so violent, indeed, that from the perspective of historical study it is necessary to tread with care in order to avoid the pitfalls of exaggerated

accusations on either side. There can be little doubt that Mr Chamberlain sincerely believed that he had rendered his country a service, and that, incredible as it may seem, in spite of the events of the last five years, he honestly believed that Hitler's pledge on the piece of paper was to be taken seriously. This complete credulity rather than any deep intrigue is the key to the Chamberlain diplomacy. That the peace was temporarily saved was not, as Mr Chamberlain supposed, any great achievement, for peace can generally be achieved if one is willing to submit to the burglar's terms.

Those who defended Munich have relied mainly on the argument that Britain's defences were woefully inadequate: London was, in particular, dangerously exposed to air-attack. The reasons for this unpreparedness must be examined in a later context, but the facts are beyond dispute. Much more debatable, however, is the claim that Germany would have risked going to war and that her chances of victory, in that event, would have been more sure than in the following year. Here, necessarily, we enter the field of speculation, and, once again, we must avoid in these pages the temptation to conjecture what might have happened if a different policy had been pursued. The only comment which it is legitimate in this context to make is that it was to Russia's interests to prevent a German occupation of Czechoslovakia, and that Hitler had been consistent in avoiding at all costs a war on two fronts. By 1939 the British attitude to Russia had successfully assured the loss of Soviet assistance, and the military situation, despite British rearmament, was accordingly far worse.

The contention that Munich was justified because at least it saved Czechoslovakia from annihilation may at first sight appear to be more convincing. It is true that, although her western frontier was formidably defended, she was exposed from the Austrian side. It is true also that neither Britain, France, nor Russia could render her any immediate assistance. But it would be hypocritical to pretend that the Anglo-French policy was actuated by altruistic considerations as to Czech lives: Britain and France decided to surrender primarily in order to avoid involving themselves in war. It must also be remembered that the same conditions applied equally in the case of Poland in 1939, and yet

Britain and France decided to go to war at the inevitable price of a Polish massacre.

There are three conclusions in regard to this inglorious episode which stand outside the realm of conjecture and must be recorded if we are to form any kind of adequate judgment. First, although the capitulation of Munich was an event of cardinal importance to Britain, it was concluded, under the urgency of events, without any consultation with Parliament. Mr Chamberlain acted without democratic authority: and, although urgent foreign policy decisions have usually to be subject to such procedure, the failure to consult Parliament in any real sense was peculiarly unfortunate where the issues at stake were of so highly controversial and critical a nature. Secondly, even if we fully admit that Britain was in no position to risk war, the fatal mistake of the Chamberlain policy was that of becoming so intimately involved in the Czechoslovakian issue. If the Government was convinced that the country was too unprepared to fight, it should have warned the Prague and the Paris Governments from the first that Britain could play no part in the dispute. As Mr Amery, a former Conservative Secretary to the Dominions, had suggested, the fatal course was for Britain "to go on half encouraging Czechoslovakia, half encouraging France with the idea that we shall stand behind her, half encouraging Germany to think we shall run out, and then at the last moment coming in for what may be the greatest disaster that Europe and the world have known. Let us rather make up our minds that we must stand out . . . or let us say . . . in language as plain and simple as we can make it, that the first German soldier or aeroplane to cross the Czech border will bring the whole might of this country against Germany."

No argument has been or can be adduced to excuse Mr Chamberlain for this fatal error. He deliberately sent Lord Runciman to Prague. The moment he had done so Britain was placed morally in the position of judge, and was therefore committed in the Czech issue up to the hilt, more completely indeed than if she had signed the most solemn of pledges. When her judgment was flouted, Britain's status was directly challenged.

Thirdly, we have to confess that, having volunteered to act as judge and having submitted to seeing her judgment

insolently flouted, Britain suffered at Mr Chamberlain's hands the greatest disgrace in the whole of her history. She was humiliated as never before. The price of peace at Munich could not have been more shameful, and, moreover, it was paid in vain. Less than six months later Hitler had broken his Munich pledges, and the "peace for our time" which Mr Chamberlain had promised to the cheering crowds lasted exactly one year.

### *The weakness of British armaments*

The contention that, having involved herself prominently in the Sudetenland dispute, Great Britain was compelled to pay the bitter price of Munich because of her unpreparedness for war, raises the question why she was so unprepared. As we have seen, it was no secret that soon after coming to power Hitler had embarked on a vigorous campaign of rearmament, and though the details of this rearmament were not made public, the British Government had its Intelligence Service to furnish it with this information. Moreover, during the whole of this decade the European situation was steadily deteriorating: the Government had, indeed, largely justified its non-intervention attitude over Spain on the ground that world-war was an imminent possibility. The attempt to saddle the Labour Party with the responsibility for this failure to prevent Germany stealing a march cannot be seriously maintained. It is true that the Labour leaders opposed the rearmament programme on the ground that it was accompanied by, and was, in their view, necessitated by the Government's determination to abandon the League as an instrument of collective security. But, however inconsistent or misjudged the Labour attitude may have proved to have been, considered in the light of subsequent developments, the Party numbered as a result of the 1931 elections less than 9 per cent. of the House of Commons and was anything but a formidable opposition. The Conservative Government, from the parliamentary standpoint at least, could have carried out any programme it wished.

The question, however, remains—why was Germany able to become so much more powerful than Britain?

Britain had been the only country to reduce her armaments during the 1926-31 period, but the reduction was slight. In the 1926-27 year she had spent £116,000,000 : in 1930-31 she was spending £109,000,000. By 1931 Great Britain was fifth in air-strength, France leading and being followed in order by the United States, Japan and Italy. In November 1932 Mr Baldwin delivered a speech which caused much public alarm. "The bomber," he said, "will always get through. The only defence is in offence, which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves." The general effect of this speech on Government policy was curious : it produced the impression that defensive air-preparations were hardly worth while. At the time of Munich Britain possessed only one fighter-plane to every two bombers.

We shall have presently to take account of the wave of quasi-pacifist or anti-armament sentiment which was reflected during this period in many quarters. But it is necessary at once to note that the Government's hesitation to compete in the armaments-race was due mainly to quite other considerations. In 1933, for instance, Sir Arthur Balfour, chairman of a large steel company, expressed the opinion that "one of the greatest menaces to peace to-day is the totally unarmed condition of Germany." It was not Germany who was considered in these circles to be the menace. A much more direct cause of Government hesitancy, however, was the world-slump and the consequent economies and cuts which had been carried out in the fighting Services. Mr Duff Cooper, Financial Secretary to the War Office, introducing the army-estimates on March 9, 1933, stated that "the danger of national bankruptcy was then (1931) rightly thought to be an even greater danger than having an inefficient fighting service." When Sir Philip Sassoon introduced the air-estimates on March 8 of the following year he adopted a similar tone. "These estimates . . . are the outcome," he said, "of our desire to pursue disarmament and to study economy on the one hand, and of the reluctant conviction that the policy of postponement of the 1933 programme cannot be continued." Sir John Simon, speaking in the House for the Government on February 6, 1934, stated that one proposition which could

not be "effectually challenged . . . is that Germany's claim to equality of rights in the matter of armaments cannot be resisted, and ought not to be resisted." When Mr Churchill uttered the first of his warning speeches and pointed out that by the end of 1935 Germany would have reached equality with Britain, and by 1936 would be stronger, Mr Baldwin denied the truth of the assertion. "It is not the case," he said, "that Germany is approaching equality with us."

On March 19, 1935, Mr Churchill challenged the statement of the Under-Secretary of State for Air that Britain still possessed a margin of superiority in aeroplanes over Germany. Mr Churchill claimed that Germany had already 600 first-line planes and that the real figure might easily be double that amount: while Germany was producing 125 planes a month, Britain was building only 100 planes a year. The Government again refused to admit the accuracy of Mr Churchill's information.

It is necessary now to turn to the entirely different claim which the Government subsequently offered in its defence, namely that the state of opinion in the country was such that no vigorous armament policy could have been launched during these crucial years without incurring the defeat of the Government. Mr Baldwin's famous speech on this point deserves careful examination. 'I put before the House my own views,' he said, 'with an appalling frankness. From 1933 I and my friends were very worried about what was happening in Europe. There was the Disarmament Conference and a strong pacific feeling in the country. The Fulham bye-election was lost on the pacifist issue. Suppose I had gone to the country . . . and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? . . . I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain. . . . Had I taken such action as Mr Churchill desired me to take, it would have defeated entirely the end I had in view.'

This speech may have been 'appallingly frank,' but it was certainly unfortunately phrased, inasmuch as it suggested that the Government refrained for party-motives from undertaking a policy which it regarded as otherwise



necessary. The duty of a Government in a democracy is to inform the public of what it regards as the realities and to appeal to the public to support any measures which it believes to be essential in view of the realities, even if it loses office as a result: the safety of the country is more important even than the welfare of the Conservative Party. Yet the Government deliberately postponed a serious rearmament programme until 1936—after the General Election—although a White Paper on the situation had been issued in 1935. In any case, it is doubtful whether the Fulham bye-election was in any sense a triumph for pacifism: it marked, on the contrary, the preference of the electors for collective security rather than comparative isolationism. Nor does the notorious resolution passed by the Oxford Union, and subsequently adopted by a number of other university debating societies, "That this House will not die for King or country," reflect more than the disinclination of that generation to be involved in another imperialist war. There was, undoubtedly, a body of opinion which was genuinely pacifist, *i.e.*, which regarded recourse to war as wrong under any circumstances. But the majority of those who were opposed to a large-scale armament programme based their opposition, rightly or wrongly, on the belief that, if collective security were mobilised, Britain's contribution of arms need not be so excessive, and concurrently that the collective security which the League might still offer would supply the means of introducing collateral disarmament. This is clearly indicated by the ballot which the League of Nations Union conducted in 1935, and which had a considerable political effect. 11,090,387 voted that Britain should remain a member of the League, and only 355,853 against: 10,470,489 voted for a reduction of armaments by international agreement, and 862,755 against: 9,533,588 were in favour of the abolition of combatant aircraft by international agreement, and 1,689,786 against: 10,027,608 as against 635,074 were in favour of non-military sanctions against an aggressor, and 6,784,386 against 2,351,981 in favour of military sanctions.

By 1936 rearmament had begun in earnest. The air estimates were up to £39 million plus £3 million for the Fleet Air Arm. On May 21, 1936, Mr Churchill urged the

creation of a Ministry of Supply to meet the needs of the three services, but the Government rejected the proposal on the ground that it would introduce dictatorial powers and would interfere with the export trade. Hitler was by now, however, sacrificing the whole of German export trade for war-purposes. Moreover, whereas in Germany there were by 1936 twelve million workers conscripted for A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions), in Britain one million was reckoned as the required total, and only 200,000 workers had volunteered.

On March 3, 1937, the Labour Party decided to move a 'token' reduction on the Service estimates. The Labour Party case was directed against the foreign policy which, it alleged, alone made this increasing expenditure necessary. The whole question of rearmament, the Labour leaders protested, was related to the League of Nations and collective security, and as they were unwilling to hand the Government a blank cheque for rearmament, they demanded a definite pledge as to the purpose for which rearmaments were to be used.

The Labour Opposition was on strong ground in criticising the Government's foreign policy, for one of the gravest features of the situation was that Britain was making no effort to build up a peace-front against the common danger. Even if the League was no longer effective, the collaboration not only of France but of the Soviet Union was essential: and, even if the Soviet forces were to be reckoned at the lowest measure of efficiency, Russia, in view of her immense numbers and her geographical position, remained the decisive factor in withstanding the Nazi peril. Yet the British Government not only made no attempt to explore the possibilities of co-operation with the Soviet Republics but consistently turned down Soviet proposals for joint deliberation and action. On the other hand, the Labour Party was unable to clear itself of the odium of having, in effect, opposed drastic rearmament. It is doubtful, indeed, whether if co-operation with France and Russia had been secured, Britain could have afforded at this period to rearm at a lower level.

The responsibility for the failure to prevent Germany becoming so powerful a menace and for the comparative weakness of Britain rests solely, however, on the shoulders

of the Conservative Government: it cannot be shifted to other shoulders. It is still sometimes alleged that the fault can be traced to Versailles, and that the second war was made possible because the terms of 1919 were not sufficiently severe. But this claim is wholly untrue. Germany was up to 1933 one of the weakest States in Europe, from the military, naval and aerial standpoint. 1933 to 1938 is the critical and the only critical period, and during that period the Conservatives alone were in office. Far from attempting to prevent German rearmament, they inclined from the first to a policy of appeasement, even entering, as we have seen, into a private naval agreement to permit Germany to build a comparatively large fleet. Similarly, they discouraged any attempt to form a common defensive front with potential allies. If it is claimed that the public was opposed to large-scale war-preparation, the answer is that the Government should have warned it more decisively of the acute peril of the situation. It was not until 1936 that the Government undertook a serious rearmament programme, and even then the standard of rearmament fell well below the rate which Mr Churchill declared to be necessary; subsequent events confirmed only too decisively the accuracy of the Churchill statements.

There remains the question why, even after production was under way, Britain found herself so far behind the German scale when the storm burst. Britain in 1937-38 was spending some £278 million on war-preparation, £405 million in 1938-39, and £509 million in 1939-40. Nevertheless, Germany at the time of Munich is supposed to have had 3,300 first-line planes against 1,600 British, and Britain was producing only 300 per month against Germany's 600. At the Munich period Britain had some 720 bombers (only 200 ready for active duty) against Germany's 1,500. Mr Kennedy<sup>1</sup> attributes this delay to the adoption by Britain of what he calls a "shadow-factory" scheme, that is, the different aeroplane parts were made at separate factories and assembled at a centralised plant. Under the German method each entire plane was constructed at the various decentralised factories. The advantage of the British method was that each factory was able to concentrate on the specialised manufacture by which it was best equipped.

<sup>1</sup> *Why England Slept.*

The disadvantages of this method, Mr Kennedy argues, were that it took several years before the whole system had begun to run smoothly, that an air-raid might put one of the key factories out of action, and that there was inevitable inefficiency in assembling the planes—from time to time there would be hundreds of propellers ready but no engines, or engines but no corresponding number of fuselages. In general it may be said that the German method was that of mass-production, while Britain relied on skilled production, on quality rather than quantity. This caused some friction with the trade-unions, since, once this method was applied on a large-scale, it necessarily meant the employment of comparative unskilled workers in skilled labour. The trade-unions remembered what had happened in the last war when these standards were lowered, and in the light of that experience raised difficulties as to this development.

But, whatever the reasons, the fact remains that at Munich, and still more, when the peak of the war-crisis was reached in 1940, the nation awoke to the fact that it was in desperate peril owing, not only to the defection of France, but to the comparative weakness of its own defensive and offensive arm. The blame for this can rest only on those who were in power, and no one is more guilty of the negligence which brought the nation to the verge of catastrophe than Mr Baldwin himself.

### *Aftermath of Munich*

Whether Mr Chamberlain, when he had recovered from the emotional stimulus of Munich, realised what he had done is a secret which can never fully be known. It was at least significant that the promise of 'peace for our time' was not considered by the Government reliable enough to warrant any relaxation of war-preparation. On the contrary, the rearmament programme was pressed forward with increasing activity. In November the Nazi Government gave a further proof of its ruthless character. A young Polish Jew, Herschel Grynszpan, whose aged parents, having been ejected from Germany and refused admission to Poland, were starving in a frontier-ditch, went to Paris

on November 7 and murdered Ernst vom Rath, a German official at the Embassy. Reprisals on all Jews in Germany were instantly carried out. Seven synagogues in Berlin and twenty-one in Vienna were burnt to the ground. On November 11 a fine of one billion marks was imposed on the Jewish population. Nazi roughs looted and destroyed Jewish shops, and the proprietors were then forced to repair them at their own expense. An order was issued excluding Jews from all theatres, cinemas, concert-halls and museums. Over one hundred men and women were turned out of the Home for Aged Jews in Munich: their ultimate fate was never disclosed. Meanwhile, the situation in the Far East became more critical owing to the Japanese action at Tientsin, to which reference has already been made. On March 10, 1939, Stalin delivered a speech which was almost completely ignored by the British press, except by the Communist *Daily Worker*, but which was an important indication of the reaction of the Soviet Republics to Anglo-French policy. Stalin denounced the western Powers in uncompromising terms for having 'bought off Germany at the price of Austria and Czechoslovakia.' The British Government, however, while pushing forward with rearmament, professed to take an optimistic view of the general position. It seemed as though this Cabinet was doomed on every occasion and at every turn to make statements and define an attitude which were falsified immediately by the course of events. Certainly this incident is one of the most amazing miscalculations of the Government's career. The Press was inspired from March 9-13 to declare that international relations had so improved that there was good reason to expect a disarmament-conference by the autumn. It is difficult to believe that Cabinet ministers were so misinformed by the Secret Service that they were unaware of what was already—by March 8—the subject of public rumour.

-This time there was no attempt on the part of the Nazi dictatorship to manufacture an excuse for its breach of faith, save the general accusation that the invaded country was in a state of disorder. On March 15 German troops poured across the new frontiers and entered Prague on the same day. The provinces of Bohemia and Moravia were instantly annexed, but Hitler promised to recognise

the independence of Slovakia. Forty-eight hours later he had broken even this pledge by marching troops into that territory. Hitler now completed the plunder which Munich had placed within his reach. A puppet Government was set up in Prague—Benes was already in exile—and concentration camps with the other familiar features of Gestapo tyranny were established. The last relics of Czech independence were obliterated.

Mr Chamberlain's first reaction to this exposure of the futility of the Munich assurances was to make light of the crisis. Addressing the House of Commons on March 15, when the rape of Czechoslovakia had already taken place, he declared that he had no wish to be associated with any indictment that Hitler was guilty of a breach of faith. In this connexion it is not perhaps without significance that the Federation of British Industries was at this moment engaged at Dusseldorf in drawing up a far-reaching agreement with German industrialists to form an alliance between the commercial organizations of both countries in a common front against American and other rivals.

Mr Chamberlain's extraordinary utterance produced a revolt in the Conservative Party of such dimensions that he was forced to recant in a speech at Birmingham two days later, a speech which was unsparing in vigorous protest. On March 18 the Soviet Union, having been asked by the British Ambassador in Moscow to define its attitude, proposed a conference at Bucharest of Britain, France, Poland, Rumania, Turkey and the Soviet Union to discuss the possibility of preventing further aggression. The British Government reply to this proposal was that it was 'premature,' and it suggested as an alternative a joint-declaration against aggression by Britain, France, Poland and the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union expressed the view that a declaration was not a satisfactory substitute, but nevertheless consented to the arrangement. Poland, however, refused to sign any agreement with the Soviet Union.

On March 22 Hitler seized Memel, and it was evident that preparations were on foot for an immediate capture of Danzig. The two Axis dictators had now embarked on a campaign of open loot. The mask was finally discarded: the settlement of grievances and the fulfilment of ambitions were to be accomplished by unashamed violence. Even in

the midst of this catastrophic situation Mr Chamberlain was found repeating on March 23 the dictum that the Government was anxious not "to set up in Europe opposing blocks of countries with different ideals about the forms of their internal administration." The logical effect of this standpoint was quasi-isolationism, and it was at this point that the Chamberlain policy reached its most dangerous peak. On March 31st the Conservative Government gave a guarantee of assistance to Poland in the event of her becoming the victim of aggressive action. On April 13 similar guarantees were offered to Rumania and Greece, following the invasion of Albania by Italy.

Great Britain was thus committed to go to war. No more momentous decision could have been reached, and it is important for us to consider how far this decision was the fruit of careful calculation of the full implications of such action, or the result of panic-stricken and reckless statesmanship. The integrity of a guarantee is tested by the question whether it can in fact be implemented, and, as the subsequent events of 1939 revealed, neither Britain nor France could directly assist Poland when the clash came. All that they could do was to declare war: but that is a very different matter from fulfilling a guarantee, which is presumably a promise of protection. The only possibility of affording Poland direct help could come from the Soviet Union, but Poland refused to allow a single Red soldier to cross the frontier. Under such circumstances Britain could legitimately have withdrawn her offer, or could have brought pressure on the Warsaw Government to accept the conditions of Russian aid. Any suggestion that Britain was unjustified in bringing such pressure to bear is obviously untenable in the light of the relentless pressure which had been exerted on Czechoslovakia. But the guarantee was given without any effort to induce Poland to accept conditions which alone could have rendered the guarantee valid: the Soviet Union was not even consulted.

Questioned in Parliament at a later period (October 3) as to why the Polish guarantee was given without consultation with Parliament, Mr Chamberlain replied: "When we gave the guarantee to Poland the matter was imminent. We did not know that Poland might not be invaded within a term which could be measured by hours and not by days."

That was on March 31. Some ten days earlier the situation was such that, in Chamberlain's estimate, it was 'premature' to consider the Soviet proposal to form a front against aggression.

On April 7 Mussolini carried out the invasion of Albania. The date chosen for this act of war was Good Friday, a Christian commemoration which was apparently of less importance in Mussolini's calendar than the feast of Stephen. In January 1925, replying to an accusation that he had planned a revolt on that latter festival, he said: "Can you really think I could order on the day following the announcement of Christ's birth, when all saintly spirits are hovering here, I could order an assault?"<sup>1</sup> Mussolini claimed that the Albanian invasion was no breach of the Anglo-Italian pact of 1938, on the ground that the *status-quo* was not affected.

On April 15 the British Government inquired of Moscow whether the Soviet Union would be willing to make a declaration of unilateral guarantee to Poland and Rumania. On the 17th Moscow replied that this would mean that the Soviet would alone incur the responsibility of assisting the two countries most likely next to be involved in war. The Soviet Government pointed out in this note that the effect of guaranteeing two single countries might well be to invite acts of aggression elsewhere, and suggested as an alternative a triple pact of mutual assistance between Britain, France and itself, a military convention to implement such a pact, and a guarantee to all border States from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The British Government gave no answer to this proposal for three weeks. Six weeks elapsed before it was decided to negotiate on the proposal. In the interval *The Times*, on April 18, published a leading article suggesting that Hitler should be further appeased, and on the 24th the British Ambassador, who had been recalled from Berlin, was sent back to his post, a decision which was regarded both in Germany and in America as a sign that Britain was still determined to explore the possibilities of the appeasement policy. On May 3 a letter appeared in *The Times*, signed by Lord Rushcliffe and supposed to have been drawn up in collaboration with Sir Horace Wilson, who

<sup>1</sup> Mussolini's Autobiography, translated by Child.



was at this time Mr Chamberlain's chief Civil Service advisor. It suggested that the line taken at Munich should be further pursued and that every effort should be made to conciliate and not to oppose Hitler.

At this moment an ominous appointment was made in the Russian Government. Molotov replaced Litvinov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The appointment indicated a radical change of Soviet foreign policy, and from this moment can probably be dated the Soviet decision to seek an understanding with Germany, on the calculation that Britain and France were unlikely to make any serious effort to prevent aggression. It was subsequently claimed that the Soviet was guilty of double-dealing in continuing to pursue negotiations with Britain and almost certainly at the same time to have commenced negotiations with Germany. The Soviet was certainly unaffected by altruistic motives, and was thinking primarily of its own safety: if Britain procrastinated and raised endless difficulties, it would be wiser, in the view of Moscow, to seek an understanding with the enemy. Yet, it is difficult to deny that Britain was following the very course which she condemned Russia for adopting. The trend of British policy was clearly that of pressing for agreement with Germany to explore the possibilities of appeasement and concurrently to pursue negotiations with the Soviet. The only difference was that the British double-line was evident, while the Russian diplomacy was secret. Yet some indication of Soviet doubts was revealed in a speech delivered by Molotov on May 31, a speech again not reported fully in the British press. Replying to a suggestion in the House that he should get into direct touch with Soviet authorities, Mr Chamberlain replied in a manner directly calculated to cause Soviet resentment, and with studied insolence: "Perhaps the honourable member," he said, "would suggest with whom I should make personal contact, because personalties (in Russia) change rather rapidly."

At the end of April conscription was introduced in Great Britain for men of twenty to twenty-one, for a period of six months. At the same time Hitler had commenced to denounce the Ten Year Pact with Poland, this campaign of abuse mounting in crescendo during the summer. On May 27, the British and French Governments had at last

agreed to discuss the Russian proposal for a triple pact. Although the League had been virtually abandoned by Britain during these years of crisis, the Government now insisted that the pact should operate through League machinery, and that only Poland and Rumania should be protected. The Russians, however, were mainly interested in the Baltic countries. On June 8, Lord Halifax in the House of Lords urged the possibility of a conference with Germany in order to see how far the Nazi claims could be met. Commenting on this speech in the adjourned debate Lord Davies, who was associated with the New Commonwealth group and could not be suspected of any Left affinities, remarked: "The Russian Government know perfectly well that in certain quarters in this country there is lurking a hope that the German eagles will fly eastwards and not westwards. . . . Sometimes I wonder whether, even now, the Cabinet are really in earnest, or whether these negotiations are not merely another sop to public opinion."

On June 14 the British Government sent Mr Strang to Moscow on a mission of negotiation. Mr Lloyd George subsequently described this appointment as an "insult." Certainly, nothing could have been more directly calculated to confirm Russian doubts as to British sincerity. Chamberlain had gone personally to Hitler, Chamberlain and Lord Halifax had visited Mussolini, but a Foreign Office official was considered good enough for the Soviet Republic, in spite of the fact that Moscow had invited a visit from Lord Halifax. Mr Strang was well acquainted with Soviet affairs, though he was suspected of anti-Soviet sympathy: moreover, he was without authority and had constantly to delay the negotiations by referring back to London for instructions. This was peculiarly unfortunate, as important issues were raised by Russia which required the presence of some one of premier rank. The Soviet Union insisted that as the Nazi technique was usually to foment revolt from within and to compel the existing Government of a threatened State to adopt a pro-Nazi policy, the only realistic defence against aggression would be to counteract such measures by exerting similar pressure on the Governments of small States. The British view was that it would not be legitimate so to interfere with the independent rights of a State.

*The Times* correspondent in Berlin as early as June 17 warned his readers that if the Soviet-British negotiations were to fail some *rapprochement* between Moscow and the Reich might be expected. A more ominous and official warning was uttered on June 29 by Zhdanov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet parliament. Writing in *Pravda* he expressed the view that Britain and France had no intention of making a pact, and pointed out that of the seventy-five days given up to the negotiations, the U.S.S.R. had occupied only sixteen for preparing their questions and answers, while the French and British had taken up fifty-nine days. Sir Francis Lindley, an ex-ambassador addressing the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee, strongly advocated that there should be no pact with the Soviet Union.

Much criticism was created both at home and abroad by the disclosure that, in the middle of July, Herr Wohltat, a German official, had been in direct consultation with the Secretary to the Department of Overseas Trade, Mr Hudson, with a view to raising a loan of several hundred million pounds to Germany. This was a further indication that the Government still believed in the possibility of appeasement, and was still hesitating to commit itself to the entirely contrary policy which the Soviet negotiations represented. An illustration of the incompatibility of these two policies was afforded by the visit of von Ribbentrop to Paris in December 1938. While he was engaged in signing a Franco-German declaration recognising mutual frontiers — he had come to Paris unostentatiously, fearing a hostile demonstration — with the connivance of the British Government, Mr Duff Cooper, a few yards away, was preaching to a French audience the necessity of firm resistance to Nazi demands. On August 9 Lord Kemsley, a Conservative newspaper proprietor, visited Germany and is supposed to have engaged there in several important conversations. On August 20 *The Sunday Graphic*, one of his own journals, published an article advocating a four-Power pact, from which the Soviet Union would be excluded.

The slow progress of the negotiations in Moscow led the Soviet Government to propose immediate military staff talks. Britain and France at once agreed to send

delegations. But, although the international situation had now reached a stage of critical urgency, when every hour might bring the news that war had broken out, the military missions left eleven days after the proposal had been accepted, and left neither by air nor by a fast vessel, but in a ship which took six days over the journey. This delay seems incredible, in spite of *The Times'* excuse that rapid transport was impossible as too many aeroplanes would have had to be chartered. Further criticism was aroused by the fact that the military delegates, like Mr Strang, who was now recalled, were without sufficient authority to make immediate decisions. It must be remembered, however, that it was important to France and Britain that their military plans should not be disclosed to a State whose alliance they had not succeeded in obtaining and with whom they appear to have been resolved not to reach agreement. The final breach occurred when the Poles definitely refused Soviet military assistance. On August 19 a Soviet-German commercial agreement was signed, and on August 23 the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact. To conclude and sign this pact Germany did not send a civil-servant, nor employ a ship for his transport. Von Ribbentrop himself flew to Moscow.

War with Germany was now inevitable, for Germany was assured that her eastern frontier would not be attacked; and once the Polish army was crushed, the full weight of the German army machine would fall on Britain and France. The first reaction of the British public was a bitter resentment against the Soviet Union, on the ground that it had double-crossed the British statesmen: while the diplomatic and military negotiations had been painfully pursuing their course the Russians had evidently been intriguing with the enemy. Yet, as we have seen, the Chamberlain policy of appeasement was in effect a similar attempt to seek to make terms with the enemy, concurrently with the effort to form a resistance-front with Russia. The strongest indictment which can be levied against the Soviet Union is that by its pact with Germany it deliberately precipitated war on France and Britain. Yet, here again, the parallel with the Chamberlain policy is close: the appeasers sought to keep peace with Germany, knowing full well that the effect would be to encourage Hitler to invade the Ukraine and

threaten Moscow. Some supporters of Mr Chamberlain did not conceal their approval of such possible developments. In any case the British Government had been outwitted, and at one stroke had placed the country in a position far more dangerous than that of 1914.

The British policy may be acquitted of the charge of deliberate deceit: but it must certainly be condemned on the ground of its fatal hesitancy to choose between resistance and conciliation, and by its still more fatal inability to understand the Russian mind and to extricate itself from its bitter prejudices against the Soviet Union. Everything which could have been done to irritate and to cause suspicion in Moscow was consistently carried out. The Stalin generation in Russia was not concerned with the welfare and salvation of the capitalist world: it was determined to do what it thought to be safest for Russian interests. The Soviet Union was resolved above all else not, as in 1914, to bear the brunt of the German attack for the sake of Western democracies, while they, relieved from this pressure, were able to wage war on Germany at a much lesser cost to themselves. But, however 'nationalist' the Russian outlook and however low the quality of the Soviet war-strength might be rated, it was vital—in the interests of Britain and France—that Soviet co-operation should be secured. Chamberlain by pledging Britain to go to war on behalf of Poland, without having obtained the absolute assurance of a Russian alliance, was to bring both his own country and France to the very brink of disaster.

Both Mr Chamberlain and Lord Halifax may have appreciated, in those last fateful hours, the extreme peril of the situation which their policy had precipitated. The indictment which must be levied against them and their colleagues is that their policy was vitiated by two radical defects: they hesitated, even in the last critical period, between appeasement and resistance: and their minds were so conditioned by prejudice and suspicion against the Soviet Union that they failed altogether to realise how desperately perilous the situation would be if Russia was alienated. Hence, they dallied with Russia, they flirted with Germany, they gave reckless pledges to Poland and Rumania which they could not fulfil. Either they should have studied Russian susceptibilities and wholeheartedly

sought a defensive alliance, at the very latest when Prague had fallen : or else, if they were convinced that the Soviet Union could not be trusted and believed that Hitler might even yet prove reasonable, they should have paid the full price of appeasement and confessed the unwillingness of Britain to interfere in the course of events in Europe, directing their energies to the building up of British strength and in consolidation of relationships with America. By compromising Britain failed in almost all her objectives. She lost Soviet support, she failed to keep peace with Germany, and she was forced to stand by and see Poland devastated and her guarantee of protection rendered futile.

The remaining days of August 1939 were coloured by the usual campaign of abuse directed towards the victim selected by the Nazis for their next conquest. The nation which, six years before, had been offered by Germany a ten-years' pact, was now characterised in the German press as a people of savage instincts, liars, traitors and the rest. A message was sent by President Roosevelt both to Hitler and the Polish President. The Pope and the King of the Belgians broadcast appeals for peace. Hitler replied by addressing Daladier and other statesmen in terms which showed that he was mentally incapable of appreciating rational considerations : he emphasised the justice of German claims upon Danzig, but ignored the real issue, the question whether those claims should be satisfied by civilised means or by the methods of the murderer. On August 28 the British Government urged Hitler to enter into direct negotiations with Poland. Hitler replied the following day, agreeing to this course, but qualifying his consent by the physically impossible condition that a Polish emissary must reach Berlin by the 30th with full powers of arbitration. In the early hours of the morning Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin, reminded the German Government that it was obviously unreasonable to expect the arrival of the Polish representative that day. Ribbentrop read him at top speed a long document embodying sixteen points, but refused to give him a copy, as it was now "too late" for any deliberations. On August 31 Henderson was kept waiting by Ribbentrop until 6.30 p.m. before he was granted an audience. The Polish Ambassador in Berlin tried to get into touch with Warsaw ;

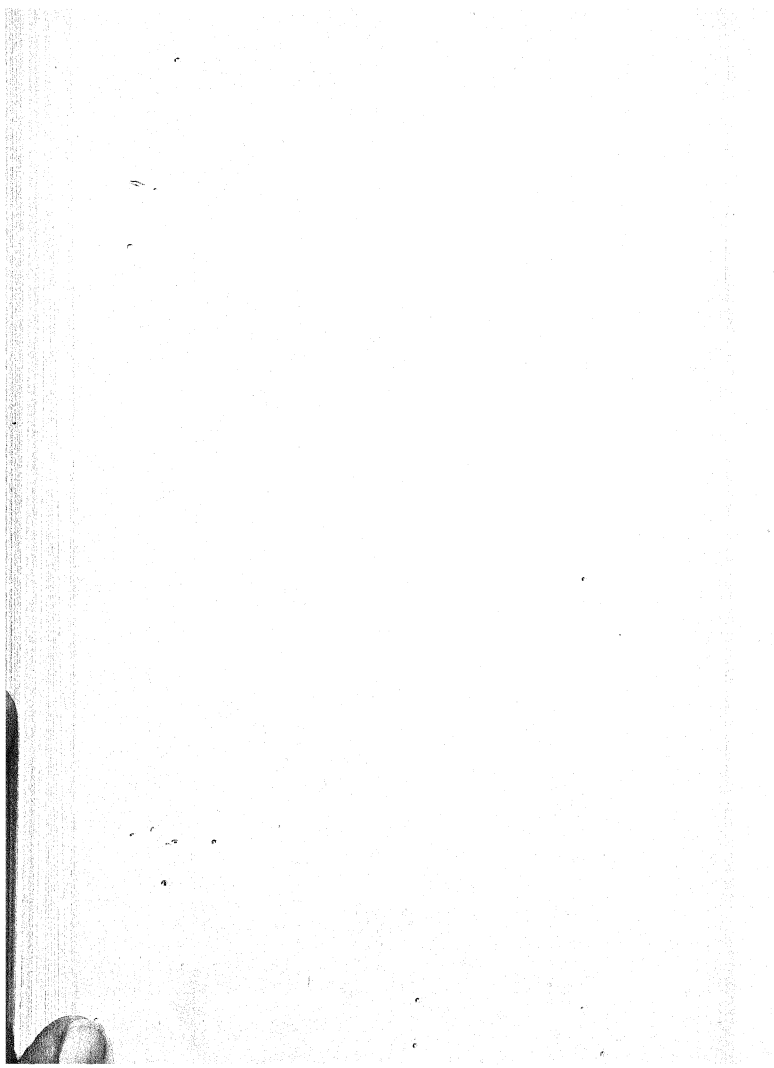
vainly, since telephone communication between the capitals had been deliberately disconnected by the German Government.

At 5.30 a.m. on September 1, 1939, the German army invaded Poland. The curtain had risen on the second world-tragedy.

PART TWO

THE SECOND WORLD-WAR





## CHAPTER 1

### THE FIRST PHASE

#### *The Invasion of Poland*

THE second world-war commenced promptly at dawn on September 1, 1939. The German armies advanced into Poland from both sides of the Corridor, from Pomerania, East Prussia, Silesia and Slovakia. Simultaneously, German aeroplanes bombed Warsaw, Lodz, Graudenz, Tczew, Katowice, Cracow and other Polish towns. All the chief Polish aerodromes and railway-junctions were attacked from the air, the former with such deadly effect that many Polish troops were rendered 'blind' from the first hours of the struggle. Gdynia was also bombed, while German warships immediately opened fire both on that port and on the Westerplatte munitions depot at Danzig, which was held with heroic endurance by a small Polish garrison for seven days.

There can have been no doubt in the minds both of experts and of amateurs as to the result of this uneven struggle. Unlike that Czechoslovakian army which Germany would have encountered, if there had been war instead of the Munich surrender, the Polish forces had little mechanised equipment to oppose the vast and efficient German machine. In actual numerical proportions they were fighting at a ratio of less than two to three. Moreover, on the advice of the British and French Governments, Polish mobilization had been postponed for two days, only commencing on August 31. Thus, by the time hostilities commenced not more than one million men were in the field, out of a possible three million, and the aerial bombardment of troop-trains seriously hampered the sending up of reinforcements. But the main inequality was to be seen in the paucity of Polish mechanised equipment. The Polish military staff appear to have been thinking still in the terms of cavalry. The Polish soldiers were gallant and eager to defend their country. But, as the hopelessness of their position became daily more apparent, there is evidence to show that their

temper turned to a bitter resentment against those leaders who had left them so woefully unprepared.

There can have been no doubt as to the outcome of this uneven struggle. There was, however, some room for surprise at the speed with which the German hosts crushed all effective resistance. Up till the final phases there remained the hope in the hearts both of Polish soldiers and civilians that the guarantee to which France and Britain had solemnly pledged themselves would prove to be more than an empty gesture. A formal ultimatum was indeed dispatched, directly hostilities had broken out, from London and Paris, demanding the instant withdrawal of German troops from the territory which they had invaded. As this demand was refused by the German Government a state of war existed between that country and Great Britain as from 11.0 a.m. on September 3: the French ultimatum was not reckoned to expire until 5.0 p.m., a delay which caused some temporary misgiving in certain British circles. The curtain of the black-out had descended on Great Britain two nights previously.

On that strange Sunday morning the British Parliament met to hear the inevitable tidings that the second world-war had commenced. Neither in the House nor in the streets of London were there any such demonstrations as had marked the fateful August evening in 1914, no cheering crowds outside Buckingham Palace, no waving of flags or jubilistic patriotism. Here, as in France and Germany, the spirit of the people was that of a grim resignation. The air-raid warning, sounded in London at eleven that Sunday morning, gave the English public their first taste of war conditions.

The main questions in the public mind at this opening stage of the conflict were how far the Allies would be able to implement their guarantee to Poland, and what form the offensive against Germany would take. It was soon evident, however, that no immediate offensive was contemplated. On September 4 the R.A.F. raided Wilhelmshaven and Brunsbüttel, but its activities were chiefly confined to the task of dropping pamphlets over Germany. Mr Chamberlain had broadcast an appeal to the German people to rise against Hitler, and ten million copies of the speech were distributed in this manner. The effect of the aerial

propaganda-campaign seems to have been negligible, and, indeed, many of the later pamphlets were singularly ill-designed. Although it was a criminal offence for any German citizen to be found in possession of such literature, and the leaflets should therefore have consisted of bold headings which could be read without being picked up from the ground, they usually consisted of sheets of close type. Their message was a reminder of the frequent occasions on which the Fuehrer had broken his pledges and of the inconsistency of his protestations of friendship for the Soviet Union in view of his previous denunciations. The compilers of these pamphlets seem to have been pioneers rather than experts in the art of propaganda, and the most that can be said for this form of political warfare is that the flights which it entailed were of value for reconnaissance purposes.

In the actual area of the Western Front there was no sign of such aerial and military action as would relieve the Polish agony. French troops made a much-advertised advance in the Saar district and shelled the aerodrome at Saarbrücken. But the ground covered by this advance was no more than the no-man's land between the Maginot and the German fortifications, and even from this limited objective the French subsequently withdrew. Mr Hore-Belisha, the War Minister, was able to announce that an expeditionary British force of 158,000 had been transported to France within five weeks, with 25,000 vehicles, including tanks. This force was only 10,000 larger than the army sent to France in 1914, and its duty was merely to guard a sector of the French line on the Belgian frontier.

The enemy was similarly determined to provoke at this stage no sort of diversion from his Polish offensive. Isolated German planes were reported off the east coast of England, and later on there was occasional reconnaissance over most parts of Britain. The sinking of the *Athenia* on the morning of September 4, was probably the unauthorised act of a German submarine, for it is unlikely that there would have been any deliberate attempt to antagonise American opinion at so early a date by selecting for attack a vessel which contained over 300 American passengers. With a delightful absence of humour, Dr Goebbels attributed the outrage to a devilish plot on the part of Mr Churchill, who had become

First Lord of the Admiralty in the re-formed Cabinet of September 3.

Meanwhile, the Polish people daily scanned the skies for some sign of a Franco-British fleet of planes coming to their assistance. "It was hoped," writes the Polish Ambassador in London, Count Raczynski, in an article addressed to British readers, "that a large-scale Allied air activity in the west would keep the major part of the German Air Force there."<sup>1</sup> The Allies, however, felt that they must take no risks, which meant that their guarantee involved no more than the waging of an immobile defensive war in France, and that they must stand by while Poland perished. Her crucifixion under Nazi domination was to be prolonged for five bitter years.

The German advance continued rapidly. On the second day of the invasion 1,500 Polish civilians had lost their lives through aerial bombardment. On September 3 the German troops had captured Katowice, Rybnik, Teschen and Frystat, in Silesia. The Jablunka Pass in the High Tatras had now been forced and the Corridor was already closed. German parachutists had begun to land behind the Polish lines.

By September 5 nearly all Upper Silesia was in German hands, and the Warta river was crossed. The Polish forces north of the Corridor were making a desperate effort to break through the German lines and join up with the main army. On September 6 Cracow and Bydgoszcz fell, and by the following day the Germans had crossed the river Dunajec. By the end of the first week the German plan of campaign had become clear: the pincer movement was converging on Warsaw, the right claw extending north-eastwards from Silesia, while the left stretched from Pomerania and East Prussia. By September 15 Warsaw was completely surrounded, Gdynia had surrendered and 60,000 Poles had been captured near Radom. Siedlce was completely destroyed from the air, and the town of Lublin was burnt to the ground. On the 18th, Drohobycz, the centre of the Galician oil-fields, was occupied, Brest-Litovsk having fallen the previous day. Lvov was encircled on the 19th and capitulated on the 22nd. On the 18th the Polish army at Pomorze had broken through and joined up

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson's *Pictorial History of the War*.

with the defenders of Warsaw. On the morning of the 16th the German commander sent an officer to the Warsaw headquarters to advise surrender. This offer was refused, and German planes thereupon began to drop leaflets advising the civilian population to leave the city by certain roads. On the 19th the German commander announced that the "Polish campaign was approaching its end." Warsaw was meanwhile subjected to a pitiless bombardment from air and ground, and was eventually reduced to a shambles. Of all the tragic ordeals to be endured in this war few cities probably suffered more severely. With their homes in ruins, light and water cut off, and disease rampant, the inhabitants were reduced until the capitulation on the 27th to conditions which can hardly be imagined.

It was at this stage, at 4.0 a.m. on September 17, that the first dramatic surprise of the war occurred. Suddenly, without previous warning, the Soviet Union forces advanced across the Polish frontier. They advanced thirty miles into Polish territory on the first day, and were preceded by aeroplanes dropping leaflets to announce that the Red Army had come to liberate Ukrainians and White Russians from the Polish yoke. By September 22 the Soviet forces had occupied a line which ran through Sventsany, Vilna, Grodno, Brest-Litovsk, Kowel, Sokal, Lvov, Bobrka, Dolina, and Kolomaya. Three Polish infantry divisions were disarmed, as well as two cavalry brigades and a number of smaller units. On the invitation of the Soviet Government Herr von Ribbentrop travelled to Moscow with the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin to make final arrangements as to the new frontier. A wave of popular indignation against the Soviet invasion at once flared up in many sections of English society, though British official utterances were more discreet. Polish propaganda represented the Soviet move as a treacherous stab in the back which actually caused the final debacle. Thus, Count Raczynski, in the article already referred to<sup>1</sup> declares that "Poland never expected Soviet help and remained sceptical when it was eagerly sought and suggested to be a panacea for all the troubles of Europe. But Poland did not expect Soviet aggression either, and had no reason to expect it." It is perhaps natural that in this desperate situation Polish sentiments should have

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson's *Pictorial History of the War*.

been expressed in terms of bitter reproach. But it must be remembered that the Soviet Union was occupying territory very nearly similar to the frontiers which had been provisionally assigned at the close of the last war, although it must also be recalled that the so-called 'Curzon line' was not intended to be an exact demarcation and had, indeed, been consistently repudiated by the Soviet Government in favour of a settlement less geographically generous to itself. It is also true that the non-aggression Pact of 1932 between Russia and Poland had recognised the frontier-line then existing, but against this must be weighed the consideration that by September 17 the Polish State, the other party to this agreement, had virtually ceased to exist.

That, indeed, must be the deciding factor in this controversy. The Polish denunciation of the Soviet invasion could only be maintained if it were shown that Poland by this date had still a reasonable chance of preserving her national sovereignty. Count Raczynski attempts to justify this claim in the same article. "The military situation," he writes, "was perhaps better on that day (September 17) than at any time since the beginning of the war." He further points out that the whole Polish army had to be concentrated to resist the eighty German divisions, and implies that, so long as it had to deal with not more than one invader, such resistance was still possible.

This endeavour to present the entry of the Soviet troops as the main cause of the Polish collapse, the claim that but for this 'stab in the back' Poland could have been saved, is the pathetic plea of a gallant cause, but it is a plea which cannot be seriously sustained. Long before the 17th the doom of Poland had been sealed. The Allies had revealed their inability to render any assistance, and without such help there was no conceivable reason why the Poles should be able to check the German advance any more effectively than they had checked it in the previous days. Nor, in the light of after events, can it be argued that the Soviet invasion was due to merely acquisitive designs. Mr Churchill, in his broadcast address on October 1, gave the only accurate interpretation. "We could have wished," he said, "that the Russian armies should be standing on their present line as the friends and allies of Poland, instead of as invaders. But that the Russian armies should stand on

this line was clearly necessary for the safety of Russia against the Nazi menace. . . . When Herr von Ribbentrop was summoned to Moscow it was to learn the fact, and to accept the fact, that Nazi designs upon the Baltic States and the Ukraine must come to a dead stop."

The Polish Government, which had established itself at Kutý, left at 7.30 p.m. on September 17, six hours before the advance Soviet troops entered the town. A new Government was set up in France, with Raczkiewicz as President and General Sikorsky as Prime Minister and leader of the remnant of the Polish army, 100,000 strong. Under Soviet occupation the wealthy landlords, priests and many other representatives of the upper classes received short shrift. It is said that several hundred priests were deported to Siberia, though unbiased information as to the conditions of Soviet rule in Poland is still difficult to obtain: there is little reason, however, to doubt that ruthless treatment was meted out to those whom the Soviet Government regarded as potential enemies. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the hostility of the Polish rulers towards the Soviet Union, a hostility so intense as to have led them to refuse presence of a single Red soldier on Polish soil, was not likely to have inspired friendly feelings among the Russian statesmen. That some of the stories of Soviet severity were exaggerated and false is proved by the fact that in 1941, when friendly relations between the two countries were established, captive Polish officers and men were in a sufficiently healthy condition at once to form an army of six divisions: they were not only physically able but morally willing to fight on Soviet soil, a determination which does not suggest that the treatment which they had received had caused any excessive resentment in their minds.

This tragic chapter of the war thus drew to its disastrous close. The Germans had used their accumulated power to strike mercilessly and efficiently. Yet the indictment against them should not be levied so much on account of their terrorist methods of fighting, for modern warfare is not a game governed by 'gentlemanly rules,' although the British service—and particularly the naval tradition—implies this viewpoint: when, for example, a British submarine encountered the German liner *Bremen*, on voyage from



Murmansk to a German port, the Admiralty reported (on December 12, 1939) that though this vessel was within torpedo-range, the submarine "was, of course, precluded by the rules of sea-warfare" from firing at her without warning. Germany's tactics on the contrary have never been merciful, and though by humanitarian principles her totalitarian strategy in the field must be deplored, her crime consists rather of the barbarities which were subsequently inflicted on Poland when she lay prostrate at the feet of the German victor. The story of this protracted horror belongs, however, to a later period in this record.

### *The Period of Lull*

If the Allies had been unable to take any offensive to relieve the desperate plight of Poland, it was unlikely that now her fate was sealed, there would be any immediate major activity on the Western Front. When the French surrendered most of the small gains which they had achieved in the Lorraine sector—the withdrawal was carried out on October 17—it was officially announced that these slight operations had only been undertaken to relieve the pressure on Poland. But for that consideration not even this small diversion apparently would have been attempted.

In the air and on the sea, however, there was greater activity. On September 13 the German Government had issued a statement alleging that Polish civilians were behaving as combatants and that as a reprisal open towns would now be shelled and bombed. Mr Chamberlain made a counter-statement to the effect that Great Britain would not resort to bombing civilians for terrorist purposes, whatever the enemy might do. It was obvious, however, that the outbreak of wholesale bombing was only a question of time, and, indeed, as the last war had shown, the distinction between open and fortified towns was doubtful. By 1940 there can have hardly been a town or village in Britain which had not become to some degree a legitimate military objective.

Hitler made a triumphal entry into Danzig on September 19, and used the occasion to denounce the Allied guarantee to Poland as the incentive which had caused Poland to defy

the Reich and thus necessitated the outbreak of hostilities. On the 22nd General von Fritsch, the former commander-in-chief, was killed near Warsaw, and rumours were at once afoot to the effect that he had been shot by the Nazis : he was supposed to have been outspoken in his criticisms of the Nazi Party. On October 6, 1939, peace-feelers made their appearance. Hitler's offer was based on the suggestion that the *casus belli* had vanished with the collapse of Poland, and that an European conference should be held at which plans for a new disarmament scheme could be discussed. Mr Chamberlain at once answered Hitler's overture by saying that it was acts, not words, which were now required. The German 'offer' was followed in November by an appeal issued jointly by the Queen of Holland and the King of Belgium, offering their services as mediators. But the Allies were hardly in the mood to consider such negotiations seriously. The outrage on Poland had not been expiated because Poland had been crushed, and both French and British statesmen by now had learned that no reliance could be placed on any Nazi assurance that no further aggression was contemplated. King George VI replied to the Netherlands offer that Great Britain would be unable to contemplate such overtures until there was definite proof that Germany would be willing to employ pacific means in place of violent methods for the settlement of international disputes. "Should your Majesties," he declared, "be able to communicate any proposals from Germany of such a character . . . my Government would give them their most earnest consideration."

It would be difficult to question the correctness and, indeed, the inevitability of this reply. The only criticism which can be advanced is that the Allies had allowed themselves to be manœuvred into a position which might be represented as banging the door on peace. Had they been first in the field with a positive statement that they were willing to lay down their arms once all possibility of aggression was removed they would have been able more effectively to refute the claim that it was they and not Germany who were the war-minded protagonists. As it was, German propagandists seized the opportunity to denounce the Allied Governments as determined to plunge the world into a prolonged struggle, a denunciation with

which Soviet statesmen unwisely allowed themselves to be associated. That the Allies were justified in refusing to listen to Hitler's overtures or to make use of the royal offer can hardly be doubted: to enter a council chamber at the very moment when Hitler was mercilessly trampling upon his conquered enemy would have been criminal surrender to Nazi aggression, and would have led not to a state of peace but to the perilous uncertainty of the pre-war years.

A sensational bomb-outrage at Munich on November 8 gave rise to the hope that there were already rifts in the Nazi Party. The occasion was the annual celebration of the 'putsch' of 1923, and the scene that beer-cellar where the Party may be said to have been born. Some minutes after Hitler and the other Nazi leaders had left the building a bomb exploded: it had been placed in the pillar next to the rostrum from which the Fuehrer had been speaking. The hall was completely wrecked and nine persons killed. Hitler and his associates escaped injury only because they had left earlier than had previously been arranged. There were rumours that the bomb must have been planted by someone who was himself within the Nazi circle: but, in spite of an effort on the part of the German wireless and press to attribute the incident to agents of the British Secret Service, and though several arrests were made by the Gestapo, the explanation of the outrage remained undisclosed.

On land the Front was as immobile as in the opening weeks. This was the phase of what became known as the 'phony period' of the war. W. L. Shirer,<sup>1</sup> the American broadcaster, relates how on his journeys from Berlin to Switzerland, he could see from the train German soldiers playing games on their side of the Rhine within full view of the French and within range of the French machine-guns. Both among the French and British peoples the impression gained ground that modern warfare, on account of such defensive weapons as the Maginot Line, had become a stale-mate, and that it was therefore not so bad a war after all. There were few casualties, no shelling, none of the murderous infantry raids which had characterised the last war.<sup>2</sup> The Allied General Staff was inclined to believe

<sup>1</sup> *Berlin Diary*.

<sup>2</sup> Daladier told the Chamber of Deputies on December 22, 1939, that up to November 30 only 1,136 French soldiers had been killed in action.

that as the Germans were evidently afraid to attack, the war would be won by the blockade. Time was therefore on the Allied side. True, unlike 1914, Germany was not encircled: but, though the Soviet Union might be willing to supply a certain amount of food and war-material to the enemy, Germany's inability to import from overseas would slowly tell. That the Soviet Union did not intend to throw in its military weight on the side of Germany seemed to be assured by a barter-agreement which was concluded between London and Moscow on October 11, 1939, whereby the Soviet Union agreed to supply Britain with Russian timber in return for rubber and tin.

Subsequent events were soon to prove the tragic error of the assumption that the enemy was unwilling or unable to strike. The Germans refrained from launching an immediate offensive partly because they needed to recuperate from the damage which the gallant resistance of the Poles had inflicted on them. The Polish army had accounted for some 240,000 German casualties and 700 'planes, and, moreover, the Germans had used up a large amount of petrol in the campaign. This lull in the conflict gave the Allies several valuable months in which to strengthen their forces and equipment. That more effective use was not made of this breathing-space is due mainly to the fact that the Allied strategy relied on defensive tactics. The conception that the Allies could afford to stand on the defensive was, in turn, the reflection of deeper causes. It was a consequence of the political belief that the democracies had merely to preserve their existing civilization from the Fascist onslaught, that once this onslaught was successfully resisted, their social and economic system could be retained intact. No theory could have been more disastrously mistaken. The Allies had yet to learn, at the price of near-catastrophe, that, just as military annihilation could only be averted by an offensive even more vigorous and positive than that which the enemy was able to pursue, so their civilization could be saved only by economic and social changes more radically creative than any revolution which Fascism was capable of accomplishing.

This tendency towards an attitude of defensive complacency in Britain was somewhat shaken by the introduction on September 27, 1939, of the first war-budget. The heavy

taxation announced by Sir John Simon was a reminder that, even if the war had taken this comparatively bloodless form, the expenditure involved was already £2,400,000 a day and would prove to be an appalling drain on the country's resources if the war was to be prolonged. By July 1940, £6,500,000 a day, or £9,500,000—if all national expenses are included—were being spent, £4,500,000 more than the maximum rate reached in the former war. By the same date taxation had assumed proportions hitherto unknown in British financial history.

In air and on sea there was by now a greater activity. On October 16 German bombers made their first appearance over British territory, attacking Rosyth and the Firth of Forth without causing serious destruction. On the following day raids were carried out on Scapa Flow and the Orkneys: the *Iron Duke* was slightly damaged. A series of raids followed on the Shetlands and Orkneys, but as yet neither side was resorting to inland attack.

The first naval loss which Britain sustained was the sinking of the *Courageous* on September 18. On October 14 the *Royal Oak* was sunk. This battleship was lying in Scapa Flow, so that the submarine exploit was of a peculiarly daring character: Mr Churchill admitted that there had evidently been some serious gap in the defensive organization which required drastic investigation. Later in the year the Germans commenced to lay a new type of magnetic mine in British waters. In December the Navy was able to announce a satisfactory success in the Atlantic. The pocket-battleship *Graf Spee*, which had been causing considerable damage to shipping, was engaged by the cruisers *Exeter*, *Achilles* and *Ajax* and driven into Montevideo harbour. Shortly before the time-limit set by the Uruguay Government for her sanctuary had expired, the battleship was blown up by the German crew. Her commander, Captain Langsdorff, preferred this fate to that of meeting the British naval squadron on the open sea. Three days later, on December 20, 1939, it was announced that the commander had committed suicide.

At a speech at the Mansion House in London on January 9, 1940, Mr Chamberlain stated that "if from British losses by enemy action and from ordinary marine casualties were subtracted the British gains by captures from the enemy,

new ships, etc., there had been a loss up to date of 122,000 tons, less than one per cent. of the modern fleet which we possess."

### *The Soviet attack on Finland*

In the absence of any major operations in the military field the chief interest in this phase of the struggle shifted to the activities of Russia. Her annexation of Eastern Poland was recognised, as we have seen, by Mr Churchill as significant. On September 28 she concluded an agreement with Estonia whereby bases were acquired for the Soviet naval and aerial forces, and under the terms of which both parties undertook not to enter into alliances against each other. On October 5 a similar treaty was signed with Latvia: Libau and Windau were to be used by the Soviet Union as naval and air bases. On October 10 a pact was arranged with Lithuania. The Soviet Union handed over the district of Vilna in return for permission to maintain land and air forces of strictly limited size on Lithuanian soil. Mutual military assistance was guaranteed under the treaty, and emphasis was laid on the assurance that these terms were not intended in any way to interfere with existing sovereign rights.

A much more uncompromising attitude, however, was adopted by the Soviet Government soon after the fall of France. Alleging that the Governments of these three States had "showed by all their behaviour that they were prepared to aid Hitler in every way," new elections were imposed on July 14 and 15, 1940, with a 93 per cent. majority in Estonia, 97 per cent. in Latvia, and 99 per cent. in Lithuania for the pro-Soviet candidates. The size of such majorities must inevitably awaken some suspicion as to the 'democratic' integrity of the method of voting. No figures of the actual votes were published, only the percentage cast for the popular candidates. In any case, the new Governments proceeded to embark on a home policy which was intended to introduce a Soviet order. Landowners and industrialists were expropriated, and subsequently each of these countries was formally 'incorporated' in the Soviet Union. Several hundred priests were apparently exiled to Siberia.

Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania! It was clear that the Soviet Government was determined to take vigorous and extreme precautions, and, even at the time they were taken, there could be no doubt as to the direction of the threat which, in the Soviet view, rendered such precautions necessary. The remaining danger-spot was Finland. The Finnish frontier was only a few miles distant from Leningrad, while the Finnish coast offered a number of key-positions in the Baltic approach. A Finnish representative was accordingly invited, following the same procedure as that adopted with the other Baltic States, to Moscow. The Finnish Government hesitated, but on October 8 decided to accept the invitation. The terms of the Soviet proposals were subsequently disclosed (December 12) by the Finnish Government.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union requested a thirty years' lease of Hanko, the use of the Bay of Latdoeja as a naval anchorage, the cession of five islands and of part of the Karelian Isthmus, together with a demolition of the fortifications on the Isthmus. The Soviet Union declared that there was no objection to the fortification of the Aaland Islands, provided that this was carried out by Finland alone, without collaboration with any other power. In all, the Soviet Union asked for 1,140 square miles of Finland territory, but undertook in return to cede 2,210 square miles of Soviet territory to Finland.

Kalinin, the Soviet President, insisted that the sole aim of these demands, as in the case of the other States, was to guarantee security to both countries. Finland, however, raised several objections, refusing to yield so large an amount of territory, declaring that much of the Soviet ground offered in exchange was valueless, and protesting against the proposals regarding the Hanko base. The Soviet Union replied by offering to reduce the extent of ground demanded on the Karelian Isthmus, but continued to insist on the lease of Hanko. The negotiations were eventually broken off. War was declared as from 9.0 a.m. on November 30, 1939. Soviet planes bombed Helsinki, Viipuri and Lahti. An offer of mediation from the United States of America was refused by Moscow.

Meanwhile an attempt was made by Otto Kuusinen,

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* an official booklet. *The Soviet Union, Finland and the Baltic States* (1942).

the former leader of the Finnish Communist Party, to set up a 'People's Government' at Terijoki. On December 2 the Moscow wireless announced that the Soviet Government had recognised this body as the official Government and had concluded an agreement with it. Any expectation that this body would prove to be the focus of a revolutionary movement was speedily falsified: the Finnish people rallied to the defence of their country, all their traditional anti-Russian sentiments having revived under the stress of war. At first it seemed as though the highly fortified Mannerheim line might be held against the Soviet onslaught. On December 13 the Finns recaptured Salli and claimed that the Russians had lost 2,000 men and a large number of tanks.

The Finns, indeed, put up a vigorous and gallant resistance, though the ultimate result was a foregone conclusion. But the sympathy which that resistance excited gave no excuse for the misleading reports which began to appear in the columns of the British and foreign press. The Red Army was consistently represented as badly equipped and badly led, while fantastic accounts were allowed to percolate through the Press which spread the impression among the British public that the Red troops were hopelessly inefficient. It is now known that in the opinion of the British General Staff the Soviet attack on the Mannerheim Line was brilliantly conducted. The Soviet Command may have underestimated the strength of the Finnish defence, and it is known that the exceptionally hard winter caused transport difficulties which seriously interfered with the Red Army advance: petrol was 'doped' for a higher temperature than that which actually obtained, and consequently froze. The Finns, however, were driven back in the Petsamo area and eventually along the whole front, except in the Ladoga sector. On March 12, 1940, peace was signed. As a result of Finland's resistance and defeat the Soviet terms had risen, but they were far from being the kind of terms usually imposed by a victor on a defeated foe. The whole of the Mannerheim Line, the city of Viipuri, the areas bordering Lake Ladoga, Hanko and the various islands, passed under Soviet jurisdiction. On the other hand, Mr Tanner, the Finnish minister, admitted on March 13 that "no political demands have



been presented. The Soviet Union does not interfere with our internal politics. The Kuusinen Government has been put on one side."

A wave of intense hostility against the Soviet Union nevertheless swept across Britain and America. There were demands, even in responsible quarters, that the Allies should declare war on Moscow. Mr Chamberlain disclosed to the House of Commons on March 11, 1940, that "the Allies had informed the Finnish Government, in answer to their appeal, that they were prepared to proceed immediately and jointly to the aid of that country with all the resources at their disposal." He further revealed that "there was an occasion on which the Soviet Ambassador mentioned certain terms which his Government would be prepared to offer to Finland, and His Majesty's Government did not feel able to pass those terms on to Finland."

The mentality of the political statesmen or military advisers who believed that the Allies had sufficient resources and equipment at their disposal to justify them in sending a large expeditionary force to engage a new and powerful enemy on a distant front almost beggars imagination. Mercifully, the Stockholm Government refused to risk the obligations of its neutrality by allowing the passage of these troops over Swedish soil.

This indignation against the Soviet Union found expression not only in wild comments and press propaganda but in the death-bed activities of the League of Nations. On December 14, 1939, the League formally expelled the Soviet Union from membership, and on the same day announced that Italy's resignation became effective as from the 11th. It had taken four years for the League to rid itself of the bloodstained violator of Abyssinia and Albania : it took an hour to expel the Soviet Union.

This action and the standpoint which it illustrates were indications that the Soviet Union was being blamed not so much on the merits of the Finnish issue as because it was the Soviet Union which was the aggressor : and the moral might accordingly be drawn that Moscow by going to the length of declaring war had provided the opportunity for this unbalanced hostility to express itself. A more serious criticism of the Soviet case is that Moscow should have resorted to the pretext that there was in existence a Finnish

revolutionary movement which deserved Soviet assistance. That it was found necessary to resort to this pretext was ultimately the penalty which Stalin was paying for his pact with Germany: he could not openly declare, without offending his partner, that the demands on Finland were due to the actuality and imminence of the Nazi peril. Yet, had Stalin been able to disclose the real reasons, the Soviet case would have appeared in an altogether different light, and, apart from anti-Soviet fanatics, the public, and even possibly the Finnish public, might have realised the justification of the Soviet claims. Certainly the events of 1941 were such as to confirm the Soviet estimate as to the strategic importance of Finland, and the probability that she would be exploited as a Nazi base was shown to be an entirely realistic supposition.

The attempts which were made by some advocates to maintain that the Soviet action was indistinguishable from Nazi aggression were not convincing. The Soviet policy was clearly not of an expansionist nature, for no one could pretend that Finland, even though she had deliberately provoked a war, had been treated like Poland or Czechoslovakia. Indeed, the peace-terms imposed on her were comparatively generous; before Petsamo was handed over to the Finns the damage caused by the war was repaired by the Soviet authorities. It can only be claimed that the demands on Finland were an illegitimate violation, if it is further maintained that in a world-war no such pressure must be laid on a neutral country even for the object of defence or to prevent the extension of the war. This was, in fact, the attitude taken up by Great Britain during the 1939 diplomatic negotiations with the Soviet Union. That Britain was subsequently converted to the Soviet view is proved by her own joint action in Iran early in 1941. And, if further apology for the Soviet policy is required, it may be found in a speech delivered by President Roosevelt on May 27 of that year. "We know enough by now," he said, "to realise that it would be suicide to wait until the dictators are in our front yard. Anyone with an atlas and a reasonable knowledge of the sudden striking force of modern war knows that it is stupid to wait until a probable enemy has gained a foothold from which to attack. Old-fashioned commonsense calls for the use of strategy which

will prevent such an enemy from gaining a foothold in the first place."

• *The Sumner Welles Mission*

On January 13, 1940, both Holland and Belgium became seriously alarmed by rumours of an imminent German invasion. Mr Churchill pointed the moral in outspoken terms in a speech delivered on January 20: he maintained that the clear duty of all neutrals was to unite with the Allies in resisting the Nazi menace, and declared that if ever Britain and France were to conclude a shameful peace the neutrals would become victims of either the "barbarisms of Nazidom or Bolshevism." Later in that month the anti-British party in South Africa became more active. General Hertzog stating in the South African Parliament on January 23 that the Fuehrer "cannot be accused of any lust for world-domination." A motion in favour of peace negotiations was, however, heavily defeated.

In February some tension was created between Britain and Japan. The Japanese steamer, *Asama Maru*, was stopped by a British warship in Japanese home waters and compelled to hand over twenty-one Germans. On February 16 a daring British naval exploit caused a crisis in British-Norwegian relations. The German naval auxiliary, *Altmark*, had been chased into Joessing Fjord, south of Bergen, and a destroyer entered the fjord, a naval party boarding the *Altmark* and liberating 300 British sailors who had been captured in Atlantic waters. The Norwegian Government complained that its neutrality had been violated and demanded the return of the prisoners. The British Government pointed out that Norway must not allow this German maritime traffic in Norwegian ports and waters to go unchallenged, and claimed that such raids were necessitated by Norwegian passivity. The German Government affected to pretend that the *Altmark* was an innocent merchant vessel.

Relations with Italy became strained in March by the British decision to interfere with German exports, as a reprisal for indiscriminate mine-laying German activities in the North Sea. Italian ships had been carrying German

coal from Rotterdam, and under this new regulation they would be stopped and the cargo treated as contraband. Britain offered to supply Italy with coal on barter terms, but no agreement was reached until March 9, 1940, when Britain decided to release the cargo which had been seized on the undertaking given from Rome that no more Italian ships would be sent to fetch German coal from Holland.

On February 9 the United States Government announced that Mr Sumner Welles, on behalf of the President, would visit the belligerent capitals in Europe, for the purpose of obtaining certain information as to the present situation and the possibilities of the future. This 'mission' naturally aroused conjectures as to whether America was meditating a peace-move. But the prospects of peace hardly appeared to be favourable. Hitler spoke on February 24, and his speech was conspicuously anti-British. "Heaven has not made the world for Britain alone," he complained. "There is no divine decree that three-quarters of the world should be controlled by one race." Mr Sumner Welles visited Berlin, Rome, Paris and London: in Berlin, in spite of the Fuehrer's uncompromising attitude, the members of Mr Welles' staff were constantly asked by prominent Nazis whether Mr Welles was bringing them peace.

Mr Welles reached London on March 10, 1940, and returned to Rome on the 15th. On the 18th Hitler and Mussolini met at Brenner station for a private conference, and the belief that peace moves were contemplated gained ground. Actually, however, when Mr Sumner Welles started back for America on March 20, he bore with him the information that the war, far from ending, was about to enter a much more critical phase. This was reflected in a broadcast address by Mr Churchill on March 30. "An intensification of the struggle," he said, "should be expected. More than a million Germans are drawn up along the frontiers of Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland", ready at any moment to strike a sudden blow.

Meanwhile, the British and French forces had consolidated themselves in their positions on the Franco-Belgian line. The British Expeditionary Force now numbered 222,000, excluding the Royal Air Force. The army was commanded by General Gort, the supreme command of the Allied Forces having been placed in the

hands of General Gamelin. The British line followed the Belgian frontier for some fifty-five miles, from Maulde to Halluin and thence along the river Lys to Armentières. The cities of Roubaix, Tourcoing and Lille were thus placed within the British protective zone.

During these six months of waiting staff plans had been drawn up and the probability of a German advance through the Netherlands fully considered. Lord Gort cautiously avoided commenting upon the strategy which was eventually determined. "The question of such an advance (a Franco-British advance into Belgium) was one," he writes in his Dispatch, "of high policy, with a political as well as a military aspect. It was therefore not for me to comment on it: my responsibilities were confined to ensuring that the orders issued by the French for the employment of the British Expeditionary Force were capable of being carried out."

It will be time to consider the wisdom of the French military policy in regard to Belgium in a later chapter. But it is relevant here to note that Lord Gort's dispatches reveal that, in spite of the long respite which the Allies had been given and of the opportunity, accordingly, which had been afforded for strengthening the mechanical equipment of the forces concerned, he was far from confident or satisfied. "The situation as regards equipment," he writes, "... caused me serious misgivings, even before men and material began to be diverted by the needs of operations elsewhere (in Norway). I had on several occasions called the attention of the War Office to the shortage of almost every nature of ammunition, of which the stocks in France were not nearly large enough to permit of the rates of expenditure laid down for sustained operations."

Events, however, were to show that the radical fault was not merely the quantity but the character of the equipment which would be required. The French Command had been deaf to the warnings of General de Gaulle. Even with the experience of the Polish *blitz* before their eyes there was an entire miscalculation as to the form which the German attack would take, or, at least, as to the offensive capacities of heavy tanks and the revolutionary mechanised tactics which the enemy had devised. As the curtain rises on this new and terrible phase of the war we find France

and Britain, with their armies mobilized, uneasily alert, realising that the storm was about to burst, but failing to comprehend the immensity of the weapons which were to be hurled against them. Although the left-flank of the Maginot Line ended in mid-air, and although the French authorities from the first had reckoned that the main attack would probably come through Belgium, the General Staff appears to have been satisfied that the Nazi onslaught could be held. It has since been revealed that the decision to advance into Belgium, in case of an invasion, had been deliberately reached, so that the intention in any case was to leave the western French fortified lines and rely upon the Belgian fortifications, of which, as Lord Gort admits, little was known.

The period of waiting was now about to end. By the first days of April the Germans were ready to take the initiative. The full fury of the war was to be unleashed.

## CHAPTER 2

### FALL OF NORWAY AND DENMARK

#### *Invasion of Norway*

THE invasion of Denmark and Norway is a story of efficient organization, secrecy and fraud. The invasion of the North was almost completely successful, and though those who were reared in the tradition that military conflict between civilised Powers should observe certain specified rules felt deeply offended by the disregard displayed by the Nazis towards the orthodox conventions of warfare, no one can fail to admit the ingenuity of the plan of campaign or the ability with which the plan was executed. How far the traditional standpoint may be justified, how far, that is, war can be regarded as an activity carrying with it its own moralities, is a controversy upon which it is unnecessary to embark. In actual fact any such moral orders have long ceased to exist, and the Germans won largely because they were unhampered by any pseudo-ethical considerations.

The scheme was so highly organised that much of the subsequent criticism which was aroused turned on the apparent failure of British Intelligence to detect what was afoot. Mr Churchill, speaking in the House of Commons on April 11, admitted that "for several months past we have received information as to large numbers of German merchant ships being fitted as transports" and of activities generally indicating an offensive, but he protested that there was no means of ascertaining what country was to be the victim. The first warning was received from British Air Reconnaissance on Sunday night, April 7, 1940. German battle-cruisers and a large number of destroyers and other vessels were reported out to sea and moving northwards. The *Glowworm*, a British destroyer, encountered a considerable enemy naval force steaming northwards in the Narvik direction.

It was evident that this expedition must have been planned a long time in advance. The British Government had announced on April 8 that they could no longer allow

Scandinavian neutrality to be abused by German sea-transport carrying iron ore for war-purposes ; accordingly, in spite of a formal protest from the Oslo Government, three minefields were laid in Norwegian territorial waters. Germany attempted to make this act her excuse for invasion, but Mr Chamberlain had no difficulty in showing that the German navy could only have reached their most northerly stations by starting out from the home-ports long before the mines were laid.

The people of Oslo, Bergen, and other Norwegian towns, retired to bed on the crisp spring night of Monday, April 8, entirely unaware that in a few hours' time their country would be in the grip of the war-monster. At 1.30 a.m. on the Tuesday the commander of the Norwegian warships at Horten received a message, purporting to be signed by Dr Koht, the Norwegian Foreign Minister, and ordering the Norwegian ships not to fire at the German cruisers which were shortly to enter the fjord, but to disarm and land their crews at once. The order was obeyed. The message was, of course, a forgery.

One vessel, however, did not receive the order. It was the minelayer, *Olav Tryggvason*, which had put in for repairs on that Monday evening, its presence therefore being unsuspected by the conspirators. The *Tryggvason* therefore retaliated when the *Karlsruhe* and two submarines arrived at Horten. She blocked the entrance to the Narrows, fired torpedoes and sank the *Karlsruhe*. Some of the Norwegian forts opened fire and sank the cruiser *Bluecher*. This incident shows how comparatively effective might have been the Norwegian resistance in the ordinary course of events. As it was, the Germans landed marines at Horten, forced their way through the narrows and rendered Oslo defenceless from the sea. A further act of treachery had resulted in the mines at the entrance of the fjord being electrically disconnected from the control at Drobak.

Half an hour after the arrival of the *Emden* the German Minister at Oslo handed an ultimatum to the Premier. The Norwegian Government behaved courageously in this sudden emergency and refused to capitulate. Numbers of young Norwegians before daybreak that morning, were ordered to report at Horten railway station for purposes of mobilization. They were at once rounded up by the



German marine landing-party and taken aboard the German ships.

The ultimatum was itself a fantastically offensive demand. It accused the Norwegian Government of having failed adequately to resist the Allied aggression, and ordered its resignation. Major Quisling, the head of the Norwegian Nazi party, was to form the new Government, and Norway herself was to be placed under the 'protection' of Germany. The Major, though otherwise undistinguished, has provided a new word to the international vocabulary, a 'quisling' henceforward representing a political Judas Iscariot.

Shortly before 8 a.m. Nazi bombers, not more than five in all, flew low over the city. One anti-aircraft battery opened fire, but soon relapsed into silence. Meanwhile Oslo had become a scene of a bewildered confusion. Thousands of its citizens stood watching the planes, but uncertain what to do and completely ignorant as to what was happening. There was no hostile or friendly demonstration: the people were dazed. By the early afternoon German troops, led by mounted Norwegian policemen, were marching down the streets of Oslo. Two hours later the Germans had occupied the main buildings of the capital.

The following days witnessed one of the most extraordinary performances in history. The total number of German troops in Oslo was not more than 1,500: the population of Oslo is nearly 300,000. But on that amazing Wednesday German military bands were playing, while from the windows of Parliament House the Germans were attempting to lead community-singing. Never before had musical mass-psychology been used as an instrument of war.

Meanwhile, in Bergen and Trondheim, the Norwegians were taken no less unawares. The mine belt outside Bergen harbour had been disconnected as at Drobak. The telephone line to both the fortresses guarding Bergen had been cut. Some eighty German soldiers landed on the quay from motor-boats and arrested the Chief of Police. There was a slight resistance, and twenty Norwegians were killed in the forts. Cruisers and destroyers entered the harbour, but the *Koln* was damaged by a torpedo and bombed by British planes. Trondheim was invaded from

the sea by dawn on April 9: the port was taken without a shot being fired. Even as far north as Narvik the German Expeditionary Force had taken up its positions according to timetable. Narvik was of the greatest importance to German designs, for it is linked by a small railway to the Swedish frontier, thirty miles across wild mountain country, and over this railway Germany was obtaining more than half the ore from Scandinavia which she required for war-purposes. The seizure of Narvik was by far the most risky feature of the German programme, since the remoteness of this small post isolated the German forces stationed there from the main body. On Monday night the Norwegian Government had taken steps to protect this small town by dispatching troops from the village of Malnedalen, a military base on the fjord. These troops sailed across to Narvik in a race to reach the centre of the town, and might have succeeded in gaining their objective but for the action of Colonel Sundlo, the commander of the Narvik garrison. Two Norwegian warships were in the harbour together with a number of British merchantmen. Both these warships were sunk, and the land-troops, under Colonel Sundlo's orders, retired without firing a shot. The Norwegian troops from Malnedalen arrived on the Tuesday morning, to find that the Germans had already occupied the centre of the town, the railway-bridge and the station. They were accordingly compelled to withdraw to positions outside the town along the railway.

On that same Tuesday afternoon, a British flotilla, commanded by Captain Warburton-Lee, and consisting of the destroyers *Hardy*, *Hotspur*, *Hostile*, *Havock*, and *Hunter* were cruising between the south-west end of the Lofoten Islands and the mainland. At 4 p.m. Captain Warburton-Lee learned that Narvik had been seized by the Germans and that there were in the Ofoten Fjord, at the head of which Narvik lies, at least six German destroyers, thus constituting a more powerful force than the British flotilla. Captain Warburton-Lee thereupon signalled to the Admiralty for permission to undertake an extremely hazardous attack. The Admiralty replied that he must be the sole judge as to what action to take and that the Admiralty would support him, whatever happened. At 3 a.m. on the Wednesday morning the flotilla entered the fjord. It was misty and

snowing hard. Fog-lights had to be used to enable the ships to keep in touch with one another. H.M.S. *Hardy* entered the harbour alone. Presently she caught sight of a large German destroyer. She opened fire and blew the destroyer out of the water. Two more enemy destroyers now came into view. H.M.S. *Hardy* was engaged by both of these and also by the shore-batteries. After making three attacks the *Hardy* was about to withdraw when three new German destroyers loomed out of the darkness. The *Hardy*, followed by the rest of the flotilla, turned to engage the enemy, but now the enemy destroyers had been joined by two German warships, each of over 1,800 tons displacement, and of superior calibre to any of the British vessels. The bridge of H.M.S. *Hardy* was hit and Captain Warburton-Lee mortally wounded. The only man on the bridge who was not killed or unconscious was Paymaster-Lieutenant Stanning. His left foot was useless, but he dragged himself to the wheel and steered the ship with great difficulty. The *Hunter* had been sunk, and both the *Hotspur* and the *Hostile* seriously damaged. Captain Warburton-Lee was lowered into the water, having been lashed to a stretcher, but was dead before he could be towed ashore. The remainder of the crew of the *Hardy* succeeded in abandoning ship under fire and in reaching shore in the one remaining boat, which itself had been riddled with fire. The crew eventually distributed themselves among the houses half a mile from the shore, where they endeavoured to restore their circulation. Many were seriously wounded. Able-Seaman Bailey, for example, was not only half-frozen but one of his hands had been shot away. An ambulance and sledge took the survivors to Ballanger, fifteen miles away, the journey being undertaken in conditions which must have caused excruciating agony to the wounded. Two men died on the way.

This action is a record of epic bravery, and the results, in spite of the heavy odds in favour of the enemy, were considerable. Six German supply ships had been sunk, one destroyer torpedoed, and three other destroyers heavily hit. The enemy made no attempt to pursue the remaining British destroyers, who managed to sink a German ammunition-ship, which was steaming towards them, in the course of their withdrawal from the fjord.

Previous to this action, on the morning of the 9th, outside the fjord, the German warship *Scharnhorst*, displacing 26,000 tons and carrying a complement of 1,500 men, had been engaged by the *Renown*, and Captain Warburton-Lee's flotilla had also joined in the attack. The *Scharnhorst* was hit and forced to withdraw.

### *Invasion of Denmark*

The invasion of Denmark was much more rapid and less dramatic. The operation was necessarily free of the difficulties involved in the Norwegian expedition, since the mainland of Denmark is not separated from Germany by sea. The Danish frontier is only 100 miles from Hamburg and less than 300 miles from Berlin. Denmark had no possible means of protecting herself from a Nazi onslaught, while, from the German standpoint, the Norwegian adventure rendered an occupation of this adjacent kingdom essential: a hostile air-force, with bases in Jutland, would have been a deadly threat to the security of the Reich. Had the Allies been in a position to contemplate taking aggressive action, and had they been willing to waive all considerations of the independence-rights of small neutral countries, they might have anticipated events by using Denmark as a field of their offensive action. For better or worse, however, their military policy was that of allowing the enemy at every turn to take the initiative.

Denmark was not, as is commonly supposed, taken completely by surprise. There had been for many years a small Danish Nazi party in existence. On the night of March 31 the Danish police arrested 150 members of this party for wearing uniforms at a demonstration at Aarhus, in Jutland. Three of these Nazi agents were, indeed, members of the Danish parliament. This police action was vigorously resisted, although the wearing of uniforms was illegal. On April 2 the Danish Government learned with alarm that Germany proposed to take steps to protect the transport of iron-ore from Narvik, knowing that this action would probably involve both Sweden and themselves. The fact, however, that on April 7 the German Government sent warning notes to their ministers in

Stockholm and Oslo led the Danes to hope that, after all, their own country might escape attention. They were speedily disillusioned. On the night of April 8 Nazi motored columns crossed the frontier, German warships entered the Great Belt, and troops were landed on Zealand and Fyen. By 8 a.m. Copenhagen was in German hands.

Some slight resistance was at first attempted by Danish troops, the total casualties being sixteen dead and twenty-nine wounded. Almost immediately, however, a message was broadcast by the King and the Prime Minister, appealing to their people to maintain a "calm and controlled attitude." Nazi bombers dropped leaflets over Copenhagen, announcing that the German occupation was only designed to protect them from the machinations of the Allies.

The Danish people, like the Norwegians, were utterly unaware of what had happened. As the workers on that Tuesday morning emerged from their houses and cycled through the streets of the capital, they suddenly encountered German troops who had been disembarked from the quays. In some cases they were so completely ignorant of the course of events that they imagined that this scene was a cinema-rehearsal. Before many hours had passed they were forced to realise that the freedom of Denmark had disappeared overnight. Minute instructions were issued in the name of the Nazi conquerors. Road traffic was to be suspended from sunset to sunrise. The black-out was enforced from that evening onwards. Precise regulations were announced regarding the use of Danish currency and the issue of certificates, which would be enforced legal tender when presented by German troops at Danish shops. The sale of petrol and paraffin was prohibited except by special permit. The exact nature of these orders left no doubt that the plan of invasion and occupation had been worked out at Berlin long ago, and gave the lie to the Nazi pretence that Denmark had been subjugated as a sudden emergency precaution. The subjugation of Denmark was an immediate rather than a permanent gain to the German ~~land~~ <sup>land</sup>, Danish produce depending on foreign sources for fertilizers and fodder, and particularly on oil-cake. Sixty-five per cent. of Danish dairy exports had previously gone to Britain, whose food resources accordingly suffered. Britain, however, gained by the use of a not inconsiderable

number of Danish ships in Allied ports. Denmark became subject to the Allied blockade, and this, combined with the effect of Nazi exploitation reduced her to serious privation for the remaining years of the war. Although, in return for her non-resistance, Denmark escaped the horrors of actual conflict and the degree of brutal treatment which was meted out to Poland and Greece, the heavy discipline of the Nazi aggressor created conditions very different from those the Danish nation had previously known. Their status was that of a conquered race, a foretaste of the fate which awaited all European peoples who were received into the orbit of Hitler's 'New Order.'

### *British operations in Norway*

It is time now to consider the strategy adopted by the Allies in the face of the Norwegian invasion. Mr Chamberlain had promised in reply to the Norwegian appeal for help, "full aid," that is "armed support as soon as possible." Sir Walter Womersley, Minister of Pensions, declared that "Hitler has played right into our hands. To come into the open with either his ships or men was the very thing we had been hoping Hitler would do." In the French Chamber of Deputies, M. Reynaud stated that "Germany now presents us with the picture of a sortie by a beleagured garrison." To these assurances must be added the optimistic calculations of General Ironside and the famous sentence in another of Mr Chamberlain's utterances that "Hitler has missed the 'bus.'"

The first large-scale counter-attack delivered by British naval forces was an attempt to avenge the previous losses at Narvik. On Saturday, April 13, the battleship *Warspite*, escorted by nine destroyers entered the fjord. To take so large a battleship into these narrow hostile waters was no mean navigating feat, but it was successfully negotiated. The enemy forces were engaged shortly after noon. The *Warspite* carried four aeroplanes which were sent off to scout the enemy land-defences. By the end of the day seven German destroyers had been sunk at the price of damage to three British destroyers. The shore batteries were silenced, and a landing party marched into Ballanger,

rescued the survivors of the *Hardy* and captured 120 Germans. The British ships then withdrew to the open seas.

Hopes ran high at home that the force of 100,000 men, which had been scheduled to arrive in Finland before the end of April, had the Chamberlain Government persisted in declaring war on Russia, would be employed as the nucleus of military counter-attack in Norway. The key-position for such an undertaking was obviously Trondheim : but no Allied forces were landed in this region until one week after Trondheim had been captured by the Nazis. It was therefore decided to attempt to recapture the town by a pincer movement from Namsos in the north and Aandalsnes in the south. The Namsos force managed to join up with the Norwegians at Steinkjer, but were compelled to withdraw in face of heavy German attacks by land and air. Namsos was reduced to ruins. The troops which had been landed at Aandalsnes reached the railway junction of Dombaas. On April 20 they arrived at Lillehammer to find that the Norwegian troops were in a condition of complete exhaustion : for seven days they had resisted attacks from tanks, armoured cars and bombers, with no equipment other than rifles. The British forces here also were forced to withdraw, reaching Aandalsnes on May 1. They possessed not a single landing-ground for aeroplanes. An attempt was therefore made to turn the frozen lake at Lesjeskogen, some forty miles away, into a runway. The surface of the ice was swept clear of snow, and eighteen Gladiator fighters were flown from an aircraft carrier escorted by planes of the Fleet Air Arm. This operation was soon discovered by the enemy. Eighty Nazi bombers appeared and immediately rendered the site unusable. The British anti-aircraft transport had already been sunk, and the Gladiators fought for the whole day unaided, until, at last, shortage of ammunition and petrol brought their operation to a standstill. Only five British fighters remained serviceable, and on the following day not more than one out of the original eighteen survived. They had exacted a toll of at least six, and a possible fourteen, of the Nazi planes.

The same story of desperate heroism was repeated elsewhere by British airmen throughout this campaign.

One Wellington bomber made a trip of 2,000 miles, encountering a blinding snowstorm and twenty-seven degrees of frost. The British airmen were fighting against impossible odds. Whereas they had to fly the whole distance of the North Sea to reach their objective, the Germans had the unchallenged possession of the adjacent Norwegian and Danish aerodromes. In spite of this, the Fleet Air Arm accounted for twenty Nazi aircraft off Norway in the period from April 8 to May 11, while fifty-one enemy planes were brought down by the anti-aircraft artillery of the British warships. The Germans had not achieved their invasion without a price. At least ten of their mercantile vessels had been sunk, in addition to several transports, with stores and ammunition, in the Skagerrak. Two large cruisers were destroyed, the battle-cruiser *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* damaged—the latter, however, not as seriously as at first supposed. It was subsequently claimed that in fourteen days Germany had been reduced to a third-class naval power, and even if this calculation conveys an exaggerated impression of what was achieved, there is no doubt that the enemy losses were heavier than he had anticipated would be the case.

But this was a small credit-balance to be weighed against the complete failure of British military aid to Norway. The withdrawal of the Expeditionary Force from Namsos was undertaken on the night of May 2, but on the following morning the slow-moving transports were heavily attacked, and, though they themselves escaped, one British and one French destroyer were sunk. Nor could the unpleasant fact be disguised that this withdrawal marked the complete defeat of the British military arm. The Germans had achieved what they had set out to obtain. Even at Narvik, where the British force held out for a longer period, withdrawal became necessary in the early days of June 1940, the embarkation being attended once more by heavy British sea losses, including a tanker, two destroyers and the aircraft carrier *Glorious*. The *Curlew*, an anti-aircraft ship, was sunk by bombs and the cruiser *Effingham* wrecked by striking a rock. The Norwegians, who had been carrying out an incessant and courageous guerilla-warfare in the mountains, laid down their arms on June 9, King Haakon, whose own life had been in ceaseless



danger, retiring to England together with his Government. Lack of ammunition and aircraft had compelled the Norwegian surrender.

The most disquieting feature of these operations was the revelation that the British Command, far from spending the previous six months of inactivity in careful preparation, careful organization and careful calculation as to the German potentialities, was apparently as unready to cope with the emergency as if the invasion had taken place in the early days of the war. Most people had assumed that Allied strategy would prove, when the vital test came, to have been planned thoroughly and to be capable of reckoning with any possible move on the part of the enemy. But the mind of the Allied Command was shown, on the contrary, to have underrated the appalling difficulties confronting it. The moral, indeed, of this campaign is that, if these difficulties were so overwhelming as to render effective assistance to Norway impracticable, no land-campaign should have been undertaken. If Trondheim, in fact, could not have been seized in time, it was merely courting disaster to send any military expedition to recapture it. The Norwegian Government should have been informed that, for the present, the Allies were unable to render them any help beyond naval and aerial harassing operations. However humiliating that confession of weakness would have been, it must ultimately have proved less fatal than the failure of the half-measures which were actually adopted. Apparently the Allies assumed that these half-measures would be sufficient. When Mr Churchill welcomed home the fifty-three survivors of the *Hardy* he assured them that they were the vanguard of an army which the Allies would send "in the summer to purge and cleanse the soil of the Vikings from the filthy pollution of Nazi tyranny." Even as late as April 27, 1940, Sir Samuel Hoare<sup>1</sup> was able to indulge over the wireless in characteristically lyrical phrases. "Step by step," he said, "the Allied forces must destroy the German grip upon the Norwegian seaports and air

<sup>1</sup> It was Sir Samuel Hoare who had assured the world five days before the rape of Czechoslovakia that it was now entering the golden age. "... Since the beginning of the year," he said, "there has been a notable change in public opinion. Confidence, almost suffocated in the late autumn by defeatism, has returned, hope has taken the place of fear, moral and physical robustness has overcome hysteria and hesitation." (Sir Samuel Hoare at Chelsea, March 10, 1939.)

bases. . . . To-day our wings are spread over the Arctic. To-day they are sheathed in ice. Tomorrow the sun of victory will touch them with its golden light."

Britain was fortunate in still possessing a House of Commons where some of the given facts which had contributed to the defeat could be exposed to open criticism. It was now admitted that the whole expeditionary force had not consisted of more than 12,000 men. The impossibility of effectually covering these forces with fighter aircraft had committed both their disembarkation and re-embarkation to appalling risks. Bad organization had been rife. One transport sailed without a chronometer or charts of the waters to which she was sent without escort ; there was no medical treatment available on board for the wounded. At Narvik the troops had no implements with which to dig themselves in or build huts, and were compelled to endure the fearful cold among the rocks and snow. At Namsos the force was provided neither with white coats nor snow shoes.

Sir Roger Keyes, whose record at Zeebrugge in the last war entitled him to the status of an expert authority on the tactics of naval land-attack, stated that he had been convinced from the first that the operations from Namsos were doomed to disaster so long as German ships dominated Trondheim Fjord. So strongly had he been convinced that the Admiralty plan of two flank landings was mistaken, as long as enemy ships held the fjord, that he had begged to be allowed to lead an expedition consisting of a few old ships for a direct attack. "If prompt steps had been taken immediately, and carried out with energy and speed," he declared, "after the first check occurred at Steinkjer, the situation could have been retrieved by immediate naval action." Sir Roger Keyes may possibly have been mistaken in this estimate, but his opinion cannot lightly be set aside. In general it was all too evident that the actual plan of campaign was at once too cautious and too daring ; too cautious so far as the paucity of the forces and munitions were concerned, and too daring in expecting that these small land and air forces could possibly overcome the fearful obstacles in their way. Mr Lloyd George referred to "this half-prepared, half-baked expeditionary force," and after paying tribute to the immense courage of our

troops, added : " all the more shame that we should have made fools of them."

The Prime Minister's strongest defence was his argument that a large-scale campaign would have been to play straight into the hands of the enemy, since it would have diverted so large a part of the Allied armies into this one corner of Europe that a Nazi offensive could have been successfully undertaken elsewhere. But this contention actually confirms the conclusion that no military expedition to Norway should ever have been attempted. The Norwegian adventure was only the first of a succession of tragic instances where the British allowed their strength to be dissipated by counter-attacking in various theatres with insufficient strength. The battle of Norway was a serious defeat, and, as subsequent events were to show, the economy of manpower in that theatre did not enable the Allies to save Holland or Belgium. It seems impossible to doubt that the fundamental fallacy in the Allied plans in Norway was due to a total misconception as to the strength of the Nazi war-machine. Even though the sinking of stores, including fighters and guns, was a grievous misfortune, there is now no question that, in any event, no military expedition would have been of any avail unless Norwegian landing-grounds could have been captured, so as to establish local air-fields.

A deeper issue, however, was involved in the parliamentary debate of May 9, 1940, than any criticism of military preparation. The defeat in Norway had revealed that nothing short of a totalitarian war-effort could save the Allies from disaster, and that a Government which previous to September 1939, had so misunderstood the Nazi intentions as to imagine that appeasement could avert the conflict was not the type of Government capable of carrying on a struggle of this magnitude. Mr Chamberlain might by now have become roused to indignation by Hitler's perfidy, but, so long as the British people allowed him to retain office, it meant that they were content to be represented by a Government led by a man who had been fooled by Hitler, and that, in that sense, they had not yet awakened to the full gravity of the catastrophe into which Britain and France had been precipitated. What especially infuriated the critics, who for years past had been endeavouring to

open Mr Chamberlain's eyes to the realities of the international situation, was his remark that "the people of this country do not yet realise the extent or the imminence of the threat which is impending against us."

The Labour Party had consistently refused to serve under a premier who had been guilty of Munich. This issue was brought into the open as the debate proceeded. Mr Chamberlain protested that "no Government can prosecute a war efficiently unless it has public and parliamentary support. I accept the challenge. I welcome it, indeed. At least we shall see who is with us and who is against us. I call on my friends to support us in the lobby."

Not a few Conservative members in the House were unable, even at this juncture, to think in terms other than their party loyalty. They complained that when Mr Lloyd George demanded the Premier's resignation in the interests of the country's safety he was introducing 'party politics.' So soon as the division took place, however, the Government majority fell so considerably as to reveal the presence of at least thirty-three Conservative rebels. The vote, which Mr Chamberlain had declared must be interpreted as a vote of confidence in himself, was a virtual defeat, and two days later (May 10) he resigned, his place being taken by Mr Winston Churchill. A new Government, in which the Labour and Liberal parties were represented, was at once formed. A new and more critical chapter in the history of the British war effort had commenced. The men who had consistently for years past warned the country of the approaching danger had at last been entrusted with the supreme command. No premier has ever assumed office with a greater degree of national support and confidence. But Mr Churchill had been appointed only in the nick of time. The Scandinavian invasion was but the foretaste of far more sensational events in which Britain was to be brought to the very brink of disaster and defeat.

## CHAPTER 3

### BATTLES OF FLANDERS AND OF FRANCE

#### *The Conquest of Holland*

THE accession of Mr Churchill to the premiership marked, indeed, a profound psychological change in the attitude of the British people towards the war. At the eleventh-hour they had awakened to a realization of the efforts which would be required of them, if their country was to survive. The defeat of Mr Chamberlain was the expression of a new consciousness that the men who had been chiefly responsible for allowing the country to drift into this situation of critical peril must be removed from public office, if the war was to be pursued with adequate energy. The composition of the new Government did not, however, effect any drastic break with the past. Mr Chamberlain became Lord President of the Council until October 3, 1940, when ill-health forced his retirement: he died on November 9. Lord Halifax, eventually replaced at the Foreign Office by Mr Eden, was sent to the United States of America as Ambassador, Sir Samuel Hoare became Ambassador to Fascist Spain, and Lord Simon held the Lord Chancellorship. The Labour Party accepted the offer to join the Government, at the cost of displacing an organised Opposition in the House of Commons. Sir Archibald Sinclair, leader of the Liberal group, became Air Minister. The dominating feature of the National Government was, however, the personality of the new Prime Minister. Mr Churchill was probably the only man who could have sufficiently rallied the national morale to lead the country through the darkest hour of its long history. He excited much the same type of sentiment and determination which the name of Kitchener had inspired in 1914.

It was on May 10, 1940, that Mr Chamberlain resigned. At dawn that morning Nazi troops crossed the frontiers of Holland and Belgium. "The hour has come," Hitler declared in a message to his army, "for the decisive battle for the future of the German nation . . . The fight which

begins to-day will decide the destiny of the German people for a thousand years."

The Netherlands had not been unwarned as to their approaching peril. The invasion had been planned to take place on November 11, 1939, but, on the advice of General von Brauchitsch, was postponed. Again, in January 1940, there had been a concentration of German troops on the frontiers of Holland and Belgium, and leave for the British Expeditionary Force had been temporarily suspended. On May 7, the reserves in Holland were called up, the Dutch army thus being increased by several thousands. In reply to an appeal for help, once the invasion had begun, small British and French forces were landed on the Dutch coast.

It is necessary at this point to emphasise that the Allied Command was placed in a position of even greater difficulty in regard to this urgent call for assistance than had been the case in Norway. Both Belgium and Holland had clung to the belief that strict neutrality would save them from being dragged into the maelstrom of the imminent world-conflict. Belgium from the first had deliberately dissociated herself from any attempts to form a 'peace-front' against the Nazi menace. So faithfully, indeed, had this policy been pursued that a proposal by the Allies that military plans should be jointly discussed had been turned down both by the Dutch and Belgian Governments. Consequently, the Allied Military Staff was left without any direct knowledge as to the condition and nature of the Low Country defences. There is little need to comment on the melancholy futility of this faith in neutrality. Where so unscrupulous an enemy as Nazi Germany is concerned, no protestations nor recognition of neutrality are of the slightest relevance. If such an enemy finds it desirable to attack the neutral State all that he has to do is to advance a faked allegation that that State has violated its neutral status. Thus, the German News Agency had already announced that the Reich would respect the neutrality of Belgium and Holland so long as Britain and France did so, and so long as the Low Countries showed themselves capable of maintaining it "in all strictness": the qualification is significant. Even as late as May 7, official quarters in Berlin denied all thought of a Dutch invasion. In vain did Queen Wilhelmina protest, when this promise had been flagrantly broken, "against

this unprecedented violation of good faith and of all that is decent between cultured States." The qualities of good faith or decency found no place in the Nazi code of international relationships.

Simultaneously with the attack which had commenced on the frontier, key-points, such as Rotterdam, the Hague, Leiden and Dordrecht were invaded from the air. Thousands of German troops were landed by parachute and by aeroplane. These aerial invaders were equipped with hand-grenades, gas-masks, folding bicycles, machine-guns and radio apparatus. Many of them wore Dutch or British uniforms, and in some cases were attired as priests and postmen, and in ordinary civilian dress. The railway bridge at Moerdijk, an important viaduct connecting Holland with Belgium, was captured by troops which had been hidden in barges and were so effectively disguised that they were supposed by the Dutch military guard to be their own reinforcements.

Rotterdam, as the gateway to the Rhine, was singled out for a peculiarly ferocious aerial attack. On May 14 Nazi planes dropped heavy bombs on the city, accounting for no less than 30,000 civilian deaths. A number of German soldiers were brought by Dornier flying-boats to the mouth of the river and paddled ashore in collapsible rubber-boats. Troop carriers landed an attacking force at the Rotterdam air-port. Within a few hours all strategic points in the city had been occupied. On the same day both the Hague and Utrecht surrendered. The Hague had also been vigorously bombed, and the list of casualties was heavy.

In addition to the parachutists and the air-borne troops German civilians in many of the Dutch cities opened fire from their houses, thus revealing how precisely this pre-meditated invasion had been organised. On an island in the river Maas German residents had set up their own headquarters, a headquarters professing up to the eve of the invasion to be the offices and wharf of a German firm of tugs. Soldiers were disembarked at this centre and the vessel transporting them is said to have been flying the Swedish flag. The greater portion of the south bank of the river was at once seized by German troops.

General Winkelman, in command of the Dutch troops, had issued an order on May 11, in which he claimed that

the Germans had seriously miscalculated the strength of Dutch resistance. But he was soon compelled to recognise that the military position was hopeless. Stubborn fighting had been taking place in Zeeland, around Flushing and Middleburg. The provinces of Friesland and Groningen were already held by the enemy, and German armoured cars had reached the shores of the Zuider Zee and the northern edge of the Brabant province. British naval units held the Hook and enabled some thousands of refugees to be shipped to England. Among them were the Queen and the members of the Cabinet. A small Dutch, French and British force held up the German advance across the Zuider Zee, and considerable obstruction was set up in the waterways of Amsterdam. The British Bomber Command made heavy attacks on the Waalhaven aerodrome. This aerodrome was also shelled by the Dutch destroyer *Van Galen*, which withstood thirty-five dive-bomber attacks and the crew of which, when their vessel was eventually sunk, swam ashore and continued to fight vigorously.

But the situation was too desperate to be retrieved. The Dutch had already lost over 100,000 men. All of the fifty Dutch bombers and two hundred fighters had been destroyed in aerial battle. Rotterdam was in ruins, only four or five large buildings standing in an area of two miles long and one mile wide. On May 14, General Winkelman, after consultation with the British High Command, capitulated. Five days had been sufficient in this new lightning warfare to overcome the Dutch defences. The Dutch navy escaped to British ports, and all but 10 per cent. of the merchant fleet was similarly saved, in spite of imminent danger from enemy bombers and mines. But, as the result of revolutionary and unorthodox military tactics on the part of the enemy, as well as by the treachery of fifth-columnists within the country, the freedom of Holland had been obliterated at one stroke. The Allies had had their second taste of the terrifying efficiency of the Nazi war-machine.



*Belgium and Dunkirk*

Meanwhile, on the same day, May 10, 1940, the attack on Belgium had commenced.

The attempt to defend Belgium constituted a far more serious military problem, owing to her adjacency to France, than that of aiding her sister-State. As has been indicated in the last chapter, the Allied Command had already drawn up their plans for contesting the invasion of the Low Countries, whenever it should occur. The final plan adopted involved an Allied line covering Antwerp and running south by way of Louvain, Wavre and Namur. The British Expeditionary Force was to occupy a position on the right flank of the Belgian army, starting from Louvain and ending at Wavre, where the 1st French Army Group under General Billotte would take up its stations. The French VIIth Army, under General Giraud, would be on the left of the British Forces until the Belgian Army, if compelled to retreat, fell back on that sector.

No historian can avoid the question whether, in spite of an appeal for help, the advance into Belgium should ever have been undertaken. The answer to this question involves political as well as military considerations, and from the political aspect it might be contended that, had the Allies compelled Belgium to attempt no more than a rearguard resistance, with a view to the Belgian army falling back on the French fortified line, the abandonment of both Holland and Belgium could have been justified as a necessary consequence of their deliberate neutrality and of the resulting ignorance on the part of the Allies as to the condition of their defences. It is evident, as Lord Gort subsequently pointed out, that the French took far too optimistic a view of the strength of the Belgian frontier fortifications.

At 1.0 p.m. on that fateful day the British forces crossed into Belgium. German air-attack was ominously slight, suggesting that the Allied advance was far from unacceptable to the Nazi plans. The immediate news from the Belgian front was alarming. The Belgian troops in the north were already falling back, and enemy action in the rear prevented them from destroying the vitally important

bridges over the Albert Canal and the Meuse. British bombers had to be sent to impede the German advance over these viaducts and for three days were heavily engaged: their numbers were reduced to 50 planes, 78 having been lost against the destruction of 101 enemy planes. Although Lord Gort appealed for four new squadrons, only one could be immediately dispatched: when the other squadrons arrived, they had at once to be sent to the French line farther east. In addition, it was now discovered that the anti-tank obstructions on the Gembloux line were totally ineffective, and in the rear of this line were actually unfinished. But still more serious was the news that a strong German attack had been launched on the French II<sup>nd</sup> Army front, in the Luxembourg sector, the weakest point of the French defences. By May 12 this thrust had developed into an advance through the valleys of the Ardennes and a break-through between Sedan and Mézières, across the Meuse. On May 14 came the news of the Dutch surrender.

It is important at this point to realise that the German break-through at Sedan became an infinitely more deadly peril the more the Anglo-French troops advanced into Belgium. The Germans under Reichenau were advancing westwards, the Allies moving east. It is evident that the moment the German thrust had matured the armies in Belgium should have been ordered by the French Command to retire at full speed so as to avoid encirclement.<sup>1</sup>

Not a day, not a moment should have been lost. The fatal defect in these critical days was obviously the lack of liaison between the British and General Georges' headquarters. "I received no information through this channel," writes Lord Gort in his Dispatches, "of any steps it was prepared to take to close the gap which might have been effected by my own command." It was not until midnight on May 19 that he was informed by General Billotte, who was responsible for Allied strategy in Belgium, of the degree of the disaster and of the steps which would now have to be taken as a consequence. During the four previous days the position on the Belgian front was mainly viewed

<sup>1</sup> Thus, General Rowan-Robinson writing in *Fighting Forces* (August, 1940) remarks: "Had Gamelin warned the army in Belgium of the extent of the disaster at Sedan and ordered its immediate withdrawal, this threat might have been avoided."

in independent perspective. In that sense the position was serious but not critical. The Allied advance had been stopped by May 15, but the orders sent to Lord Gort were to withdraw to the line of the Escaut, an operation which was successfully carried out. On the 16th the French wireless announced "a very marked improvement in the situation." The Allied line still covered Antwerp, Louvain and a point to the west of Wavre. The Belgians had retreated to their pre-arranged positions effecting a junction with the British at Alost, and were not at present being seriously engaged. German forces had made some advance on the forward British positions south-west of Louvain, but there had been successfully held. The French 1st Army had, however, lost ground and was comparatively disorganised by continual tank attack. This line ran through Mons and Mauberge, and vigorous assistance was rendered them by the British Air Force. The Escaut line was reached on Sunday morning the 19th, but by now the situation had completely changed. The whole Belgian Expeditionary Force was already in danger of being cut off.

In order to appreciate why a strategy of orderly retirement was no longer practicable it is necessary to turn to a consideration of what was happening in northern France. The gap at Sedan had rapidly become a corridor. By the 18th of May the Reichenau shock-troops, composed of tanks and motor-cycles, had reached Amiens, and by the 20th had penetrated to Péronne, St Quentin and Bapaume. South of Péronne, therefore, the northern Allied line ceased to exist.

The obvious reply to this thrust was a French counter-attack from the Somme and the Aisne, where the bases were still intact. On May 13 and 14 at Tirmont and Dinant French tank units made an attempt to stop the German onrush. On the 17th and 18th at Laon and Rethel other tank-troops were hurled against the Reichenau army. On the 19th French troops at Mauberge and Valenciennes made vain endeavours to break through the German torrent and advance to the south. On the 21st and 22nd British divisions opened an attack south of Arras, but were driven back and compelled to retreat northwards. All these undertakings were, however, local and on a small scale. The essential movement on which everything should have

been risked, if the northern armies were to be saved, was never attempted.

Why was this attempt never made? Mainly the failure to counter-attack was due to the sheer incapacity of the French infantry to meet the enemy's shock-tactics and the speed by which they were executed: the Germans had advanced 100 miles in two days. The new German strategy was a perfect combination of activities. Parachutists operated first, occupying, for example, the Meuse bridges and one of the forts in the Liège region. Next came the pioneers, dropped also from aeroplanes and armed with flame-throwers and explosive charges: they could silence fire-points, remove minor fortifications and barriers, and were peculiarly useful to the main advance through their ability to build bridges and repair roads. Machine-gun troops would then operate against any fortified positions. A further and one of the most effective features of the new warfare was the employment of dive-bombers, in some cases operating as heavy artillery and by their noise and incessant attack demoralising the defending troops. Six hundred and fifty dive-bombers were employed in the preliminary attack on the Meuse. Finally, the tanks would blast their way through. No single fortified position in this campaign was able to hold out against the Germans for more than two days.

A second answer is that in this first phase of the attack on France the French General Staff did not seriously contemplate the possibility of saving the northern group of armies. General Gamelin was evidently more concerned to preserve a Somme-Aisne front which would defend central France. Consequently, in such sporadic counter-attacks as were attempted, the French were endeavouring to prevent a German advance southwards, while, in fact, the whole German torrent was sweeping west.

The German technique was to employ the full art of rapid movement. Once the Belgian and French defences had been blasted the tank-arm was used to split the Allied front into two separate wings. The German tank-units were accompanied by motorised infantry and motor-cycle corps. Motor-cyclists played the part of light cavalry, scouting in all directions and obtaining information as to the immediate points of resistance. The tank-units were

accompanied by strong air-forces, the aim of which was to prevent any possible counter-attack. The Germans, once having found a way through, used their tanks with reckless prodigality: if the first line of tanks was held up, the infantry and air-forces mowed down the obstruction, and support tanks continued the advance. The whole of the French strategy was blown sky-high. The French had been forced out of their defensive lines into open warfare: they were faced with feats of rapid movement which they had never imagined to be possible.

Early on the morning of May 20, 1940, Lord Gort was visited by Sir Edmund Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who carried with him Cabinet instructions that the British force was to move towards Amiens and to take up its stations on the left of the French army. It was obvious that these orders were based on information which was already belated. General Ironside, when he learned how the situation had developed in the last few hours, recognised the impossibility of carrying out the proposed operation and approved of Lord Gort's plans: indeed, he was so impressed with the gravity of the position that he telegraphed to General Georges expressing his view that the northern armies would be outflanked unless the French 1st Army could at once advance to Cambrai, or the main French armies were to launch an attack northwards in the Péronne sector.

Lord Gort's plan was accordingly put into operation on the next day, the 21st. The British troops round Arras, under the command of General Franklyn, set out to secure a line along the rivers Scarpe and Cojeul: the ultimate objective was Bapaume and Cambrai. Gort's men were already tired, and of the French light tanks supporting him only a quarter of the original strength was now available: the British tanks were already developing mechanical trouble. In spite of these handicaps the advance gained its first-day objective and even captured a few heavy German tanks. Here, however, the success of the advance ended. Enemy pressure proved so formidable that General Franklyn was compelled to withdraw to the south of Lille.

It was now necessary to reconstruct the entire plan of campaign. Lord Gort prepared to retire to the Franco-Belgian frontier and abandon the Escaut. The new line

would cover Courtrai and Ghent, and the King of the Belgians was asked if he would agree to withdraw if necessary to the Yser. But on the very day that this conference was held at Ypres still worse news was forthcoming. Enemy panzer divisions were advancing from Abbeville towards Boulogne and communication across the Somme was finally severed. General Weygand, who by now had replaced Gamelin, announced that he was prepared to launch the overdue offensive on the following day. But it was evident to Lord Gort that Weygand imagined that Albert and Amiens were still in French hands. On the 23rd the comparative shortage of food-supply, due to the loss of stores and the capture of bases, compelled Lord Gort to put his already strained army on half-rations. The Belgians were rapidly withdrawing. On the 26th it was decided to retreat behind the Lys and to attempt no further sorties. It was now a question of saving the northern group of armies from being completely surrounded and of effecting an evacuation from the continent. That evening the War Office wired to Lord Gort that Weygand had become finally convinced that no counter-offensive from the south could now make contact with the northern armies. M. Reynaud, the French Premier, had informed Mr Churchill of this admission in the afternoon of that day.

But this was not yet the climax of the steadily deteriorating position. The Belgian army was already approaching the limits of its powers of endurance, and, moreover, was being forced northwards instead of being able to retire according to plan on the Yser. On May 27 the King of the Belgians asked Germany for an armistice. In some British circles the view was expressed, as a result, no doubt, of the highly emotionalised atmosphere produced by the crisis, that his action was sheer treachery: in a more balanced perspective it may be seen as a counsel of despair and an effort, if possible, to save his country from any prolongation of the devastating effect of further fighting. Most of Belgium was already in Nazi hands. Nevertheless, the grim fact remained that from the moment of the Belgian surrender the northern line ended at Ypres, with a gap of twenty miles to the coast.

The military position on the 28th was roughly as follows: the northern armies formed a quadrangle, and were being

attacked on three sides. A base had been established at Dunkirk with French forces rapidly withdrawing before an enemy advance on Nieuport. The easterly line ran roughly from Nieuport to Ypres, south behind Armentières, and west behind Hazebrouck, through Cassel, Wormhoudt and Bergues. The French covered some five miles west and south of Dunkirk. The gap caused by the Belgian surrender was protected only by the heavy shelling of the Navy. But the bridges across the canal at Nieuport had not been blown up, and the enemy had already succeeded in gaining a foothold in the town.

It was now a desperate race for time. If the enemy pressed south from Nieuport and north from Boulogne, Dunkirk would be threatened and total disaster in sight. The defence of Calais as a delaying operation became therefore a matter of vital importance. This defence was entrusted to 4,000 Allied troops, of whom 3,000 were British, made up of the Rifle Brigade, 6th Rifles, Queen Victoria's Rifles and the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Tanks. Calais was soon isolated, and the task of the defenders was to hold out to the desperate end. British planes dropped ammunition and water-containers. Every house in the citadel was turned into a fortress, and for five days this small force held up two armoured divisions of the enemy, thus relieving the pressure on Dunkirk. Few episodes of the war are distinguished by a more heroic courage. Of these gallant defenders not more than thirty men were eventually rescued.

By the 31st the northern forces had fallen back on what became subsequently known as the Dunkirk 'perimeter.' Northwards it stretched along the coast from Dunkirk to the Nieuport region; southwards from Bergues to Furnes and on to Nieuport. The information as to Dunkirk which Lord Gort was receiving was not too encouraging: no ships could be loaded at the docks, and the small area was congested with French and Belgian troops and refugees. All depended on how soon enemy aerial attack would develop. The Government were under no illusions as to the chances of evacuation, and freely calculated that a large part of the Force might have to surrender. Mr Churchill himself believed that 20,000 or at best 30,000 could be rescued.

The arrangements for embarkation were placed in the

hands of the Dover Command, and the results were a triumph of emergency-organization. There were no delays, no official hesitations, and few mistakes. Every kind of craft was requisitioned. Owners of small motor-boats, as far up-river as Kew, received sudden orders to proceed to Southend and there to await orders. Destroyers, barges, tugs, minesweepers, trawlers, yachts, lifeboats, and well-known passenger steamers, including the *Brighton Belle* and the *Crested Eagle*—a thousand craft in all—were commandeered. The navigators had no easy task. Mine-fields had to be swept and the treacherous sandbanks off the Dunkirk coast avoided. Much of the rescue work had to be carried out in darkness, all lights being forbidden. The enemy eventually brought up coast-batteries from the Calais area and the main Channel-route had consequently to be altered three times. When this strange and motley armada approached the shore they found a blazing and evacuated town, with the Expeditionary Force scattered in groups along the beach and sand-dunes. Many of the boats took a perilously heavy load aboard, and even when their voyage home had commenced their troubles were far from being at an end: they were bombed and machine-gunned by enemy planes until they had reached English waters. The German planes made no attempt to press home their attack over Kent, nor did any large enemy surface-craft dispute the operation: but the scene of the embarkation and the journey back to the English shore were attended by intense harrassing attacks. The enemy raked the beaches with heavy shell-fire. Hostile aircraft, in formations of 100 strong, swooped down on the one remaining pier and on the sand-dunes where the patient groups were waiting without cover. U-boats and motor-launches swept in among the embarkation vessels. French and British troops meanwhile attempted to hold back the increasing enemy pressure from the land, so as to protect this last strip of coast and thus to enable the evacuation to be completed. The British merchant service lost 24,000 tons of shipping and there were 200 casualties—a very small percentage considering the risks of this hastily improvised operation. That there were comparatively few collisions and breakdowns is a high tribute to the skill of those engaged.



Most of the soldiers were in an utterly exhausted condition. Many of them had had to wait three days on the unsheltered dunes before they were rescued. The British Air Force was meanwhile battling against the advancing German artillery and bombing their rear positions. One hundred and nine enemy planes were brought down at a cost of thirty-seven British. In addition to the evacuation of the British troops, 112,546 allies—mostly French—had to be transported. Two divisions of the French 1st Army had desperately fought their way seventy miles from Lille through Cassel and Kemmel.

Mr Churchill had warned the House of Commons that they must be prepared for grievous tidings. No one dared to hope that more than a fragment of the northern forces could be saved. The epic of Dunkirk is an achievement not only of heroism but of efficiency and resource. In spite of the appalling conditions 337,131 men were brought home, of whom 13,053 were casualties. "A miracle of deliverance," Mr Churchill declared, "achieved by valour, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by dauntless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity is manifest to us all. The enemy was hurled back by the retreating British and French troops. He was so roughly handled that he did not harry their departure seriously."

Yet, there could be no question as to the immensity of the defeat. Stores, ammunition, guns and tanks had been lost in vast quantities. The loss of men was stated to have exceeded 30,000. The Germans claimed to have taken 300,000 French and British prisoners, and gave their own losses in the campaign as over 18,000. The 'miracle' of the rescue could not disguise the fierce realities of the catastrophe. Mr Churchill did not indeed understate its gravity. He described the close of the campaign as "a colossal military disaster."

### *The Battle of France*

Had the German High Command at the moment of the Dunkirk evacuation been in a position immediately to press on with an invasion of England it is probable that they could have attained this end. Whether it was an error

of strategy to achieve first the conquest of France will no doubt remain for ever a matter for argument. Any doubt in the ensuing four days as to the enemy's next move was resolved on the afternoon of June 3, 1940. Over a thousand bombs were dropped on Paris in its first large-scale raid. The Citroen works were badly damaged, and the total casualties were 906. The Battle for France had begun.

The Allied line now ran from the Maginot defences in the east to Montmédy, and thence south of the Aisne and Somme to the Abbeville district. A somewhat hasty improvization of anti-tank defence had been attempted at points behind the line, and General Weygand apparently believed that this might hold the enemy advance. The British force was situated on the left flank. This force received the first brunt of the attack, which was opened on the night of June 4-5.

The three main thrusts on the Allied line developed at once from Amiens, Péronne and near Soissons. The same tactics were pursued as had been so successfully carried out in the northern campaign. Heavy artillery fire and dive-bombers prepared the way for tank-advance. On the lower Somme enemy detachments pierced the Allied defences as deeply as the Bresle river, and in the Ailette region they were able to capture the Chemin des Dames, occupying the right bank of the Aisne. The number of German tanks engaged in this battle alone was estimated at more than two thousand. In most cases they operated in groups of over two or three hundred, and the weight of these terrific mass-concentrated attacks the French found to be overwhelming. Their whole strategy of a defensive line was being blown sky-high by these tactics. Indeed, from the first it became obvious that the French military machine was incapable of rushing a concentration of troops, tanks and planes to grapple with these dangerous spear-points, or, even more essential, to employ a similar type of counter-attack. A large part of their force was still immobilised in the Maginot line. This was revolutionary warfare against which the orthodox French military methods were impotent. Captain Weiss had already diagnosed<sup>1</sup> one phase of the previous northern campaign as disclosing that "the French are now compelled to resort to combat tactics they

<sup>1</sup> In the *Völkischer Beobachter* (May 21, 1940).

sought to avoid. They must fight in the open field. France has been forced into a war of movement much faster than the French General Staff believed possible."

It was not reassuring in this situation that so elderly a man as General Weygand should be in supreme command. France was fighting now, mentally as well as physically, with weapons which belonged to three decades ago.

General Weygand, officially at least, still sounded an optimistic note. The enemy, he declared on June 9, "will soon reach the end of his effort. We have now reached the last quarter of an hour. Hold fast." But the Germans were anything but exhausted. Their plan became more evident as each of these tragic days succeeded one another: it was to break the French front into several isolated segments. Already deep thrusts were appearing at Forges-les-Eaux, Breteuil, Noyon, Compiègne, Soissons-Romilly and from Rethel to Châlons-sur-Marne. General Bock was in command of the offensive directed towards western and central France. General Rundstedt was in charge of operations aiming at the advance into the south-east, and he was able to break through in the direction of Dijon-Lyon, while General Leeb was concerned to crush the Maginot Line.

The enemy was taking risks, but his defensive precautions were also as thorough as his attack. Anti-tank guns were liberally employed. The attempts of French tanks to break through northwards were entirely frustrated by the German artillery, aided by mass-formations of dive-bombers. A protective ribbon of infantry-divisions was unrolled along the Aisne and the Somme, so as to prevent any counter-attacks developing which should endanger the German push to the coast. For by now this flood sweeping westwards was irresistible. It had proceeded at the rate of over forty miles a day in Flanders; between June 10 and 25 German Panzer units covered daily distances of more than 300 miles. On June 11 the Germans threw pontoon-bridges over the Seine between Rouen and Vernon. St Valery-en-Caux was reached on June 12, and on the 14th Le Havre fell. The French with British support from the air fiercely resisted the occupation of Rheims, but here as in all the other sectors were eventually compelled to withdraw. The enemy crossed the Marne at Chateau-Thierry, but unlike 1914, they did

not halt there. Another contingent was advancing in the Oise district and reached Persan-Beaumont, only fourteen miles from Paris.

The French communiques continued to put up the bravest interpretations of the course of events that optimistic calculations would allow : in other words, they endeavoured to conceal the desperate gravity of the position. They repeated the pious aspiration that the enemy's lines of communication were dangerously extended, that he was becoming exhausted, and even that General Weygand was about to launch his long-expected counter-offensive. But each hour it was increasingly evident that the French war-machine was already paralysed by the terrible onslaught to which it was being subjected. In vain M. Reynaud, the Premier, and M. Georges Mandel attempted to rally their despairing forces. The Government had left Paris and evacuated to Tours. The Bank of France moved to Saumur. In the wake of the advancing German armies a multitude of civilians trekked along the roads with their hand-carts, and the civilian cars formed large traffic-blocks. As in Belgium no precautions had been taken to prevent this exodus by ordering cars off the road or by restricting the supply of petrol, and as a result the military Command found that both retreat and the service of reinforcements were frequently obstructed. In France alone the number of nomad refugees was little short of six million. This was a symptom of the general disorganization. France had never contemplated this disaster of open warfare and still clung to her Maginot Line in the east, though its value was now entirely negative. As the fugitives from Paris and the north fled south they encountered a countryside where the inhabitants were placidly engaged in their ordinary tasks, apparently unaware of the catastrophe which was about to overwhelm them. It is a symptom of the chaos to which France from the first moment of attack succumbed that in the drive for the coast German tanks were able in many cases to refuel at local garages, the garage-proprietors being under the impression that it was to the Allied forces that they were supplying petrol.

On the evening of June 10, 1940, Italy declared war on her neighbour.

*The Fall of France*

The 'stab in the back' which Mussolini perpetrated will probably stand out for all time as the most cowardly and treacherous act of which any responsible statesman has been guilty in the records of modern history. Mussolini had not had the courage to attack while France was still capable of offering resistance: he waited, as in the Fascist march on Rome, till he considered he was taking the least possible risk.<sup>1</sup> The meanness of his tactics was emphasised by the bombastic utterances in which he continued to indulge. It was his obvious desire to ape the Cæsars which reduced his exploits to such pitiful dimensions. Never has history exacted so glaring a revenge. That Italy's role could be only that of playing hyena to the German tiger was proved by her failure in every subsequent campaign which she undertook: everywhere she was ingloriously defeated.

This was the man and the system which Mr Chamberlain had praised as recently as December 1939. "The Italian genius," he said, "has developed in the characteristic Fascist institution a high authoritarian regime which, however, threatens neither religious nor economic freedom, nor the security of other nations."

Both Britain and the United States of America had laboured up to the last moment to dissuade Italy from entering the war. President Roosevelt revealed that he had promised Mussolini, three months previously, if he remained neutral, to ask the Powers at any future peace-conference to regard Italian claims as having the same status as those of a belligerent. Mussolini saw, however, the chance of gaining a cheap victory. "This," he assured the Roman crowds, "is the struggle of the fruitful and the young peoples against the sterile peoples on the threshold of their decline. It is the struggle between two centuries and two ideas."

<sup>1</sup> An attempt has been made by some apologists of the French Right to liken the Italian manoeuvre to the Soviet action in regard to Poland. But that comparison cannot be seriously sustained. The Soviet authorities occupied Eastern Poland, as has been already stated, when effective Polish resistance was at an end: Italy struck while France was still fighting for her life. Moreover, the Soviet policy was designed to meet the threat to its safety of a Nazi advance to the Russian frontier: Italy could not pretend that her interests were imperilled by a German occupation of France. Italy did not indeed create a protective area for herself in eastern France.

The Italian invasion had little physical effect on the deteriorating French situation : the French, even in their death-gasp, were able easily to resist the Italian advance and to inflict heavy losses upon them. The importance of the Italian move was psychological. If Mussolini dared to go to war it seemed to be clear that the end was not far distant.

On June 14, 1940, the Germans entered Paris : the Government had decided to declare Paris an open city and to attempt no resistance, in order to avoid destruction. Meanwhile, French troops were heroically fighting rear-guard actions on several fronts. But the army was already divided into four sections. The western group, of which the British Expeditionary Force was part, were fighting on a line which stretched from Evreux through Chartres to Chateaudun. This group was, in fact, being pushed rapidly back towards the Atlantic coast. One German thrust was operating towards Cherbourg, another towards Rennes and Nantes, and yet another towards Orléans. The eastern groups were driven south beyond Nevers to Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon and St Etienne.

The British Government was now faced with a critical problem. In the normal course the position would have called for the dispatch of the fullest degree of available reinforcements as could safely be spared. But the probability of a second Dunkirk, if that course were pursued, was far from remote. There were not more than three British divisions by this time on the French front : it would have been sheer madness to send troops and supplies, even on the limited scale which would be possible, only to engulf them in a further catastrophe. Not only were the Atlantic ports themselves threatened but the whisper of a French capitulation became more audible. Mr Churchill had, weeks before, flown over to France to assist M. Reynaud in stiffening the front against that defeatism which had already begun to creep into the Cabinet. It was at one of these conferences that Reynaud inquired whether Britain would release France from her obligation not to negotiate for an armistice without her Ally's consent. Mr Churchill was compelled to answer that he could not agree to this course.

Reynaud now turned to America. In a radio message

he emphasised the desperate need for immediate American assistance. As he must have anticipated, the answer given by President Roosevelt was to the effect that, so long as the Allies continued to resist, the United States Government would redouble their efforts to send supplies: more than that he could not promise, for, as he pointed out, any further step—and any such step implied America's entry into the war—rested not with him but with the decision of Congress. Moreover, the sending of supplies meant that under the existing arrangements the Allies must provide transport to fetch them. M. Reynaud told Mr Churchill that President Roosevelt's reply was in his opinion unsatisfactory. Yet, even had America been able to promise an immediate declaration of war, this support would have been no more than a moral encouragement: it would have arrived far too late to relieve the critical military situation.

Reynaud therefore repeated his request that France be allowed to break the Anglo-French agreement. The British Government now replied that they would consent to a French request for an armistice, provided that the French fleet remained in British ports during the negotiations. But this recognition of France's dire necessities was accompanied by a dramatic proposal by the British Government which, at any other moment, would have been recognised as news of historic significance. It was an offer to merge the two nations in one Franco-British Union, the immediate effect of which would be to form a single war-Cabinet and to place all the Allied forces under its direction. In the post-war period the Union would involve Britain in regarding the work of repairing French devastation as part of her own economic responsibility.

This proposal, however, though it may have value as a precedent for purposes of future federation, came too late. It could offer no hope of the urgent military assistance which France required. Mr Churchill had taken his place in the train in answer to a request that he should return to meet the French Cabinet once more at Bordeaux, when the news came that the Government had resigned and that the aged Marshal Pétain had formed a new Government charged with the task of negotiating an armistice. The worst had happened. The greatest tragedy of modern times had been enacted. On June 22, 1940, France gave

up the struggle. In three weeks she had been beaten to her knees.

The evacuation of British troops was not so critical an operation as was the retreat from Flanders, partly because the number of men to be disembarked was considerably less, and partly because the base of disembarkation was not concentrated on a single point as at Dunkirk. Nevertheless, the undertaking was frequently hazardous. Single British units would fight their way to the coast only to find that the town which they had been told to reach was already in enemy hands. Large amounts of supplies and equipment had to be abandoned. On June 17, the *Lancastria*, a 16,000 ton liner, taking off some 5,000 refugees and troops, was bombed at St Nazaire, only 2,500 being saved from the wreck. British vessels of all types plied from west-country harbours and patrolled the Atlantic coast on the look-out for troops. In the east 18,000 Polish troops managed to cross the Swiss frontier with their full equipment.

### *Causes of the French defeat*

When we attempt to assess the influences which produced so major a disaster as the defeat of the French nation we cannot confine ourselves to the immediate military causes. The French, it was obvious from the first, were out-manœuvred and insufficiently equipped with the weapons necessary to counter the new type of warfare which the Nazis had introduced. M. Guy La Chambre, Minister for Air, told the court at Riom on March 4, 1942, that at the outbreak of the war France had only 1,470 aeroplanes compared with the 1,748 which had been planned. The President of the Court stated that in September 1939, France had only 1,070 planes, of which 510 were fighters and only 442 of modern design: 390 bombers, none of which were modern: and 170 reconnaissance planes, of which only 52 were modern. Against these 1,070 he estimated that Germany at that time possessed 10,000 modern planes.

But to recognise this armament-deficiency is merely to raise the further question why France was so ill-prepared, just as to state that France was out-manœuvred raises the question why it was the Nazis and not the French who were



capable of devising a revolutionary mode of warfare. In general, the events of the last twenty years had driven France into a mood of fatalistic despair. The isolationism of America, the readiness of Britain to see Germany recover her former position, the rapid deterioration of the League of Nations, all these developments were interpreted in Paris as signs that urgent measures of security must be discovered. Failure to discover them led eventually to co-operation with Britain in the fatal Munich outlook, and then to dark whispers that, at the worst, France must look to a future where she would no longer compete with Germany but find some place, even if a subservient place, in a Fascist Europe. It was but a further symptom of this creeping paralysis that France had been dominated for many years by men whose military outlook was fundamentally conservative, and, still more serious, whose political opinions were essentially hostile to social change. The French financiers and the parties of the Right had been concerned at all costs to avert a second war: they were not prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to save democracy. "Do you want to die for Czechoslovakia?" *Gringoire*, the Fascist journal, had asked at the time of Munich. "Mourrer pour Danzig?", Déat wrote in the Radical *L'Oeuvre* in September, 1939. The Popular Front, the sympathy of the Left for Spain, the appeal for close military co-operation with the Soviet Union aroused the antipathy of the French Right, and this antipathy was a vivid indicator of the trend of the French conservative mind. If France was indeed to be forced into war at all, it must be the sort of defensive war which would not involve the destruction of her property or the kind of upheaval which might precipitate revolution. This type of mentality was hardly likely to furnish the equipment or direct the army by strategy which could counter Hitler's lightning strokes.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the Left capable of arresting the disaster. The Left had been infected

<sup>1</sup> It is one of the ironies of this strange conflict that on portions of the Maginot Line fighting continued after the armistice, as telephone communication with the troops immured there had been broken off and the officers had no idea that hostilities had ceased. And, in this connexion, it may be relevant to suggest that the popular reaction against the Maginot strategy went to impossible lengths. Had these defences been adequately completed, and had the Allies refused the enticement to advance into Belgium, it is by no means certain that the Nazi machine could have smashed through. France could not have won by these tactics, but she might at least have been able to avoid her crushing defeat.

by the sense of defeatism since the failure of the Popular Front, and, moreover, it was seriously split: the Communists, who up to 1939 had been consistently advocating war against the Fascists, found themselves obliged as a result of the German-Soviet Pact to discover that this war against the Fascists was a capitalist war which should be discouraged and sabotaged, since a German revolution would then break out.

It is important to recognise how direct a part the political attitude of the French ruling-classes played in bringing about the fall of France. It is important to recognise this chain in the sequence of events, since it discloses the fundamental issues at stake in the world-upheaval. As the war developed it became increasingly evident that the Fascist menace could only be overthrown by the Allies if they were prepared to extricate themselves from the traditions for which the Right stood. The moral of the situation which was being disclosed was that any effectual war-effort depended on the willingness of the anti-Fascist Governments to make the struggle a struggle of the peoples, and to extend the democratic principle from the political into the economic field. The realities of grim disaster showed that the existing industrial system and the psychological outlook of those military commanders who had been trained in the orthodox tradition were a direct deterrent to victory, that drastic social and economic change was itself an integral condition of victory against the enemies of civilization. In other words, the real conflict was between a new order of civilization and the old civilization resuscitated in a Fascist form. The focus of resistance to the Nazi drive inevitably became the socialist Soviet Union. The French ruling-classes perceived this implication and made their choice: better surrender to Hitler than lose their power and possessions through Communist revolution. It is significant to note what were the elements which rose to the surface when, in the last tragic hour, France decided to sue for armistice terms. The aged Marshal Pétain, Catholic and reactionary, to whom Communism was the supreme peril: Weygand, who was also strongly Catholic and whose Fascist proclivities had been evident in the Cagouard affair: Flandin: Adrien Marquet and Marcel Déat who had deserted Socialism for the quasi-Fascist

new-Socialist Party : René Belin, the former Trade Union leader, anti-Communist and anti-war : and, still more ominous, the notorious Fascist leader, de la Rocque, who became Minister for Social Welfare under the Vichy Government. Pierre Laval stands perhaps in a distinct category, for his record is that of the unscrupulous careerist rather than of the genuine believer in reactionary causes. It is, however, also significant that at a subsequent date (June 13, 1942) when Laval was speaking at a meeting of French workmen and urging them to submit to labour in Germany, he gave as his reason for the desirability of a German victory that the alternative for France would be a Communist revolution.

It was this school of thought which served as the agency for French surrender. It may be claimed that in view of the sensational military defeat there was no alternative to surrender, and that the last-moment offer by Mr Churchill of a Franco-British Union could not be seriously entertained. But, however impracticable it might have been by then to attempt any further resistance in Europe, it would have been open for the French Government to follow the precedent set by Holland and Belgium, to have abandoned the home-continent and to have retired to North Africa. To have held the West Mediterranean would have had considerable effect on the subsequent conduct of the war, even with Marseilles and Toulon in German hands. It must not be forgotten that at the time of the armistice there was a second French army of over a million which had never been in action, save for the few days' skirmish with the Italians. A third army of equal strength remained in Morocco, while a fourth guarded Syria, and was certainly up to 600,000 in strength. Moreover, there was still in being the powerful French navy whose escape the enemy could not possibly have prevented.

Such a course, it is true, would have involved abandoning the French people to the rule of the enemy and therefore to prolonged suffering, though it is doubtful whether conditions in the unoccupied zone allowed for fuller democratic freedom than those in Occupied France. Such considerations are, however, irrelevant. For the real significance of the collapse was that there was no will to resist. There was no such spirit as had led the French

people to challenge every inch of the Prussian advance in 1870, long after the military situation had become hopeless. There was no such spirit, and no effort had been made to create it. That will to resist was, indeed, cowed and suppressed by the influence of the French vested interests. The *franc-tireurs* and the defence of Paris in 1871 had led to the Commune, and Pétain feared a Commune far more than he feared Hitler.

On June 21, 1940, the French representatives from Bordeaux were received by Hitler in the same railway carriage at Compiègne where the armistice with Germany had been signed in 1918. Hitler, who was accompanied by Goering, Hess, Ribbentrop, General Brauchitsch and General Keitel, was seated in Foch's chair. A long preamble recited the Nazi interpretation of the treatment accorded to Germany at the close of the last war. Under the 1940 terms France was to be divided into 'Occupied' and 'Unoccupied' portions. The Germans were to control the whole of northern France extending from the Channel to the Swiss frontier, this area, stretching as far south as Tours, Bourges and Châlon-sur-Saône and taking in the whole Atlantic coast, thus covering Paris, Bordeaux and Orléans. The Vichy-controlled portion would be confined to one-third of French territory. In the Occupied portion the Germans would have full power, short of local administration. All naval, military and air forces were to be disarmed and demobilised, save for a small number of French troops in the Unoccupied area. All war-stocks were to be handed over in good condition and aerodromes placed under German or Italian control. The French fleet was to be demobilised, except such part as was allowed by the German Government for the safeguard of French interests in the Colonial Empire. Merchant vessels abroad were to be recalled to France or to neutral ports. All German prisoners of war were to be released, but French prisoners would be retained until the conclusion of the war. Under the Italian terms, which were signed on June 24, various African zones were to be demilitarised as well as certain naval bases.

The French representatives having affixed their signature, the famous railway-coach was taken to Berlin. and the ground was ploughed up.

*Rally of the Free French Forces*

The collapse of France had come so suddenly that French popular opinion was at first cowed rather than coherent. The chaos of the last few days of the catastrophe, the breakdown of normal organization, the flight of refugees from the north, contributed to a general confusion which dazed the French mind. All was over before the people realised what had happened. But gradually the nature and intentions of the Vichy Government began to emerge. The Republic had virtually disappeared: France had become *l'Etat Francaise*, and Pétain Chief of State. The new Government soon revealed a definitely anti-democratic and anti-semitic tendency. In the early period of the war the Communist deputies had been imprisoned on account of their anti-war attitude. Reynaud, Daladier, Mandel, Léon Blum and General Gamelin were now arrested. Jews were not to be admitted to the ranks of army-officers, and were to be excluded from the civil service and the teaching profession. Simultaneously, anti-British sentiment began to be expressed openly, where hitherto it had been latent. The controlled Press and the broadcasting-service attributed the French defeat largely to the unwillingness or inability of the British Government to send adequate forces and equipment. Nazi propaganda encouraged and probably dictated these suggestions. The Vichy Government was in the delicate position of having to conciliate its German conquerors, and yet of attempting to resist the German intention to use the remaining resources of France directly against their former allies. There is little doubt that at first this type of propaganda had a considerable effect on French opinion. The people were war-weary, and, though thankful that the actual hostilities had ceased, conscious of the shame of surrender. In this mood a scapegoat had to be found, and the scapegoat was obviously the faithless Ally which, it was urged, had precipitated France into the struggle and had then failed to give her the necessary support. Britain had not suffered either in the last or the present war what France had endured. This impression, understandable as it was, obviously failed to take account of the actual facts. Britain had contributed more both in

men and material than had been officially agreed in the Staff negotiations. In one week alone Britain had lost 78,715 tons of shipping. She had borne proportionately a large share of the fighting and had lost heavily in man-power. She had been forced to abandon vast stores both in Flanders and France. She had to meet crucial commitments overseas as well as in France, but nevertheless she had convoyed more than 23,000 vessels to French ports.

Meanwhile, General de Gaulle in England had rallied a small number of French forces which had been evacuated from Norway and Flanders and had elected to continue the fight and to repudiate the *bona fides* of the Vichy Government. He was recognised by the British Government as leader of 'Free France.' The main importance of General de Gaulle's movement was its influence as a moral gesture and as the focus or rallying-point round which French revolt could ultimately be directed. It was hoped, however, that some considerable portions of the Colonial Empire might at once repudiate the Vichy jurisdiction. Towards the end of August, Chad, which adjoins Libya and the Sudan, announced its allegiance to the Free French cause, and this was followed a few days later by a similar action on the part of French Equatorial Africa and the Cameroons. But, apart from expression of sympathy from the Belgian Congo, which took the practical form of the contribution of a field ambulance and the offer of a base hospital for the Allied forces, there were no further secessions. Indeed, the Free French movement suffered some severe set-backs owing to over-optimistic calculations as to possible colonial disaffection. General de Gaulle and Mr Churchill had at once made it clear that Free French troops, in continuing the struggle, would never be called upon to take up arms against their fellow-countrymen. The reply of Vichy was to court-martial the General in his absence, the first proceedings leading merely to a sentence of four years' imprisonment. The Vichy Government, dissatisfied with the leniency of this verdict, quashed the sentence and appointed a second court-martial. On this occasion the court condemned de Gaulle to death.

There was still hope that the French colonies would refuse to acquiesce in the armistice-surrender. General

Catroux, Governor - General of French Indo - China, announced his intention of joining the Free French forces and was at once replaced by Admiral Decoux. The High Commissioner in Morocco declared that he would continue the struggle, and General Weygand at once made a personal appeal to him to remain loyal to the Vichy allegiance. Weygand flew to Beirut on the same mission. The Governors of Madagascar and French West Africa were dismissed from office. Weygand was appointed Commander of the French Overseas Forces and took up his headquarters in Algiers. Meanwhile, Tahiti, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia threw in their lot with General de Gaulle and a message of sympathy was received from the Resident-General of Tunisia. Individual airmen continued to make their escape to Gibraltar in order to enlist under the Free French banner. It was evident that Weygand's task would be none too easy, and in these circumstances Lord Gort and Mr Duff Cooper thought the moment opportune to fly to Morocco in order to make contact with the friendly elements. The expedition was a fiasco. They met with a hostile reception and were soon compelled to return. General de Gaulle, who was busy organising the Free French forces and energetically sending messages to various colonial authorities, was also led into making a false move. On September 23, 1940, he arrived at the port of Dakar at the head of a naval escort consisting of two battleships, four cruisers, several auxiliary cruisers and destroyers. The white flag as well as the tricolour was flown in order to indicate the pacific intention of the mission. The results of the expedition were, however, anything but pacific. Admiral Darlan's fleet opened fire on de Gaulle, submarine attacks were launched, and the shore-batteries came into action. General de Gaulle, wishing to avoid bloodshed and aware that, in any event, an attack on Dakar would involve a large-scale military operation, withdrew. The Vichy Government subsequently declared that there had been several hundred casualties on land as a result of the engagement, and, though this may have been an exaggeration, the undertaking was unfortunate. General de Gaulle then travelled to the Cameroons and to Chad, where he was enthusiastically welcomed. As a counter-move Vichy troops in French Equatorial Africa captured Lambarene and attacked Libreville on the coast, where a

French submarine unsuccessfully engaged one of the British warships. After a three months' tour General de Gaulle returned to London. Some 35,000 trained men, 1,000 airmen, some 20 naval craft and 60 merchantmen were now gathered under the Free French banner. Radio-stations for Free French propaganda had been established at certain centres. The results of the mission were not on balance unfavourable, but considerably less extensive than General de Gaulle had anticipated when he set out on his journey.

### *The Battle of Oran*

The unfortunate Dakar incident leads to mention of the most painful episode of this supreme tragedy of the French downfall.

It will be remembered that when the British Prime Minister assented to the right of the French Government to sue for a separate peace, he did so on the condition that the French navy should be withdrawn to British or neutral ports. This condition was not observed, and, although Germany and Italy had promised under the armistice-terms not to employ this fleet against Britain, it was obvious that its employment in hostilities would be so valuable an asset that, particularly in view of the previous Nazi record, no reliance could be placed on the enemy guarantee. The powerful French navy in enemy hands would be a grave danger to Britain in continuing the war.

Immediate action, however unpalatable, was therefore essential. At Alexandria, where a French battleship and four cruisers, as well as a number of smaller craft, were stationed, there was little difficulty. The French naval authorities agreed that the vessels should be disabled from going to sea, that the guns should be dismantled and the ammunition removed. All but skeleton crews were removed to Syria, a certain number volunteering for further service against the Germans. At Oran and Mers-el-Kebir, however, the British demand was refused. The demand consisted of three alternatives, service for Free France, escort to a British port with reduced crews, or transit to a French port in the West Indies and demilitarization or guard under American control. Six hours was given for decision, and



two and a half hours after the time-limit had expired Admiral Gensoul replied that he would fight. Thus, the British squadron in attendance was forced to make war on those who had previously been its allies. By a bitter irony the British Admiral was Sir James Somerville who had been lately responsible for rescuing over 100,000 Frenchmen from Dunkirk. The action lasted no more than a quarter of an hour. Twenty French planes took part and the French shore-batteries opened up fire against the British. Only one French battleship escaped, but was bombed by the Fleet Air Arm. The *Richelieu*, the largest French capital ship, was sunk at Dakar on July 8, similar terms having been rejected: she was, however, subsequently refloated and took part in the action against the de Gaulle expedition, of which mention has already been made. A large proportion of the French fleet was still in French waters beyond the reach of the British naval arm. By a serious error three powerful cruisers and three destroyers were allowed in September to pass out of Toulon to Dakar, the British authorities apparently having falsely assumed that the crews had mutinied and were proceeding to join the British fleet in the Atlantic. Disciplinary action for the neglect to challenge the passage of these ships was at once promised by the British Government.

The battle of Oran was naturally given its full propaganda-value by the enemy. The Italian press described it as "the greatest crime in all history." The Vichy Government declared that M. Baudouin had repeatedly assured Mr Churchill that the French fleet would never be surrendered to Germany. M. Baudouin himself attempted to argue that the French fleet could not have put to sea in less than eight hours: but the weakness of the plea is that all the French warships were commencing to steam out of harbour when the first shots were fired.

In any case it is difficult to see what other course the British Government could have adopted. It was not French, but German faith which was in doubt. It was the probable inability of the French to resist German demands which had to be taken into account. The danger was too great to be ignored. After Oran the Vichy Government broke off all diplomatic relations with Britain, but in any event the attitude of Britain towards an administration which would

be compelled to contribute towards the German war-effort must have been delicate. In Britain the action of the Government was universally approved, bitterly as the need for it was deplored: it seemed to indicate a readiness to adopt extreme measures in an emergency, and therefore a welcome contrast to the methods of the Chamberlain Government. Yet the grim nature of this episode left its sting. Who would have guessed six months before that the peoples who had endured together the ordeal of two world-wars would be drawn into conflict with each other? Oran was both a symbol of the demoniacal success of Hitler's policy, as well as the price of the peace for which France had felt compelled to sue. It was the climax of perhaps the most profound tragedy of recent history.

If modern warfare is an achievement which deserves tribute, acknowledgment must be paid to the mind which conceived the *blitzkrieg*. This revolutionary weapon was so successful in overwhelming France, Holland, and, to some extent Norway, that its essential component parts should be noted. It required, first, an immense mechanical force which could blast its way through strong defensive positions: secondly, parachutist troops which could be landed behind enemy lines: and, thirdly, the presence of an organised Fifth Column—civilians who could be relied upon to demoralise the enemy in his own territory. All these elements were brought into play in the case of France and worked with deadly effect. The absence of the third element in the Soviet Union, and the consequent inability of the Germans to risk any large-scale employment of parachute operations proved, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter, a decisive factor in the failure of the invasion of Russia. When we come to examine the record of that campaign it will be necessary to inquire why the Soviet Union was free of that internal peril which completed the terror of the French disaster.

## CHAPTER 4

### BATTLE OF BRITAIN

#### *British defence preparations*

THE fall of France placed Britain in a position of peril greater than any which she had experienced in her long history. The Nazis were now in control of the European coast from Norway in the north to the Spanish frontier in the south. The enemy's guns across the Straits could shell Dover and Folkestone. All the French Atlantic ports were at his disposal. His planes could take off and be in flight over English ground within a few minutes. The entire resources of the vast territories now beneath the Nazi heel could be used to feed his war-machine. Moreover, the fact that the French navy was no longer an ally threw an intolerable strain on the British fleet. British warships had not only to protect convoys across the Atlantic but to patrol the Mediterranean and to check the activities of the Italian naval arm. In the Far East the defection of French Indo-China was eventually to prove a direct factor in bringing about the loss of Singapore. Britain stood alone in the world against a more powerful foe than she had ever before encountered.

Britain stood alone, and her chances of survival were undoubtedly desperate: victory seemed to be beyond the bounds of possibility. Her hope lay only in the slowly increasing degree of American support, a support which itself depended on the ability of British ships to carry supplies across the long stretch of ocean. There could no longer be thought of taking the offensive: Britain's task could be no more than to render herself as formidable as possible against Nazi invasion and blockade.

It is well that we should recognise the full value of this British determination to continue the struggle in the face of these fearful odds. It is now clear that Hitler, as well as the Vichy statesmen, assumed the inevitability of a British capitulation: it was incredible to them that the British should continue to resist. But Berlin and Vichy

had reckoned without estimating the basic qualities of British character. In this supreme hour the British people stood the test. With this monstrous shadow of uncertainty hanging over them, when each day of glorious summer weather might be darkened by the terror which had overwhelmed Poland, Norway, the Netherlands and France, men and women continued to perform their ordinary tasks without the whisper of defeatism. Their spirit was both symbolical and inspired by the eloquence of Mr Churchill's utterances: the man who at this moment could rally and lead this body of determined national will was fortunately in command. "We shall defend," he said, "every village, town and city. . . . We would rather see London laid in ruins and ashes than that it should be tamely and abjectly enslaved." (Broadcast, July 14.)

He was careful to paint no over-optimistic picture. "I have nothing to offer," he declared to the House of Commons, addressing it on May 13 for the first time as premier, "but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and suffering. . . . At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say: 'Come, then, let us go forward together in our united strength.'"

It is well not to forget how in this black moment the British people stood the test, for this fact must be weighed against those accusations of inefficiency, hesitation and complacency which were subsequently levied against them in the course of a long series of military disasters. Those criticisms may have been justified, but they do not detract from the service to mankind which Britain rendered in this supreme hour. Had Britain wavered, the doom of the world would have been sealed. America was as yet unprepared to withstand the German and Japanese attack which, in spite of the distance, she would almost certainly have been compelled eventually to meet. The Soviet Union would have had no further year in which to strengthen her preparations. The freedom of humanity depended on the will of the British people to stand at this juncture single-handed in the breach. Although Britain faced these immense odds, she could reckon on certain assets in her favour. Apart from her Middle East Forces she had

concentrated in her own home-territory most of her army : the country was now a vast military garrison. She possessed a premier whom she trusted and who exactly expressed the national determination to resist. And, above all, she suffered comparatively little from that political disintegration which had contributed to the fall of France. The Right, although it had been heavily coloured by Munich appeasement-influences and had been largely persuaded that the wisest course was to support Germany or to stand neutral while Germany moved eastwards against the Soviet Union, was now wholeheartedly anti-Nazi in view of the challenge to British imperialism and, indeed, to the very existence of British freedom. Hitler's tactics failed here where they had succeeded in France. Those elements which could normally have been relied upon to regard Communism as the ultimate menace could not fail to rally against Nazism now that it had openly declared itself the enemy of British interests, and was, at least for the moment, the apparent friend of the headquarters of the Comintern. Sir Oswald Mosley, Captain Ramsay, M.P., Mr John Beckett and the leading representatives of the avowedly Fascist section were arrested and placed under lock and key. The course of events had finally driven a wedge between the extreme Conservative wing and the Mosleyite faction, on account of the latter's pro-German proclivities. This development is a significant indication that, were the world to turn fascist, it would be a world of perpetual war, since the essence of fascism is its nationalism and therefore its inherent disunity. Fascism depends on no such consolidating element as would combine the forces of international communism. The alliance of the three Fascist powers, Germany, Italy and Japan was no more than a collaboration for immediate war-purposes. That the near-fascism of the extreme British Right was deeply divided from the open pro-Nazism of the British blackshirts was a symptom of the inability of fascism to provide any degree of international or even national unity.

As for the Left, the Labour Party was already in the Government and solidly behind the war-effort. It is true that the Communist Party pursued the same policy as that which the French Communists had followed. But in Britain the Communist influence was negligible compared

to the former strength of the Party in France. That the Communists should be advocating revolutionary defeatism and attempting to sabotage the war-effort, even when the Nazis were at the door and a Nazi victory would have meant the firing-squad or the concentration-camp, discredited in the eyes of most Englishmen their claim to be considered as a serious political force. The Communist attitude, indeed, was the penalty of clinging to the doctrinaire philosophy that whatever Moscow decided must be the line universally to be adopted in other countries: it ignored the fact that whereas the Soviet Union might have been well advised to keep out of the struggle at this juncture, such a course would have meant annihilation for Britain. *The Daily Worker* was allowed for a time to publish its virtually anti-war propaganda, but was suppressed on January 21, 1941.

The British people, but for this exception, were therefore united. There remained, however, the danger of fifth-columnist activities among the 81,000 alien refugees who had been admitted to sanctuary on British soil. The peril of the moment led to a wave of panic emergency-measures. The Home Office had already set up twelve regional advisory committees to review the cases of those who had been exempted from internment. The military arm virtually took over these responsibilities and rounded up all male and female enemy aliens between sixteen and sixty. At first these 'suspects' were given a few hours' notice to vacate certain sea-board counties: subsequently, they were placed in prison-camps, and the fact that they were elderly or ailing, or had already suffered as anti-Nazis at Hitler's hands, was ignored. No attempt was made to discriminate between friend and foe, and though it was natural enough that at such a time extreme precautions should have been taken, the fact remains that in many cases bitter hardship and injustice was caused. It was not until angry protests in Parliament and in the press had reached a climax that some effort was made to introduce an intelligent organization, to improve the conditions and to release those who were obviously guiltless. The *Arandora Star*, which was carrying German and Italian internees to Canada, was torpedoed and 613 of them drowned.

Meanwhile, elaborate precautions were taken to hinder

the activities of any parachutist who might be landed preparatory to a Nazi invasion. Overnight all sign-posts in Great Britain were taken down and the names of railway stations removed. Along the shores of the English Channel and the east coast, barbed wire, minefields and other obstructions began to make their appearance. Piers were dismantled and broken up. Thousands of barrage-balloons were added to the defences of London, to prevent low flying, and gradually these were supplied to other large cities. Tank-obstructions were set up across the roads and over the countryside. An immediate consequence of the French capitulation was the abandonment by the British of the Channel Islands, whose proximity to the French coast would have made them impossible to hold. Civilians prepared at once to evacuate, but they were viciously attacked by German dive-bombers as they waited on the quays for vessels to take them to safety.

At the beginning of the war there had been an evacuation of some 1,160,000 school-children and mothers from London and other cities, but the absence of bombing had resulted in the return of at least 700,000 of these to the evacuation areas. The threat of invasion and the certainty that bombing raids would now commence led to a second exodus. By the second week in June 1940, 120,000 children had left Greater London for the west country. In view of the emergency, however, more ambitious schemes were contemplated. A board was appointed under Mr Geoffrey Shakespeare, Under-Secretary for the Dominions, to arrange for the transport of children between the ages of five and sixteen overseas, to the United States, Canada, South Africa and Australia. 158,000 applications were received from the parents of children in State schools in England, 16,000 from other schools, and over 25,000 from Scotland. Nearly 500 children had been sent to America in advance of the scheme, a fact which provoked some criticism in Parliament. This desire to remove as many children as possible from the scene of invasion was, however, frustrated by unpleasant reminders of the dangers of sea-travel. One ship carrying 320 children was torpedoed in the Atlantic, but all were saved. Another vessel with 400 passengers aboard was sunk, the death-roll being 260, including 79 children. This ship, *The City of Benares*,

was torpedoed on September 17, 600 miles off Britain. The realization that the Navy could not provide warships to convoy these expeditions led ultimately to the abandonment of the plan.

The evacuation from town to country was not confined to children. Business firms and Government offices, as well as adult private residents, made their own plans for removal to areas which, it was considered, were less likely to be subject to aerial attack. More than a thousand large hotels in the provinces were commandeered by the Government at a few hours' notice, and here, in particular, much confusion and unemployment was caused. The eastern, south-eastern, and part of the south coast were proclaimed defence-zones, into which no unauthorised visitor was allowed to enter. Identity cards for all citizens had already been issued, and food-rationing had commenced in January 1940.

Meanwhile, preparations were hurriedly set on foot to supplement the defences of the island against invasion by organising Local Defence Volunteers. The name of this body was subsequently altered to that of the 'Home Guard.' The service was mainly part-time, the age for recruitment being from seventeen to sixty-five. In less than two months over a million persons had enrolled. The duties of this body were to guard local objectives from enemy attack until the regular forces could take over. Intensive military training was gradually introduced, although, perhaps with the precedent of the International Brigade in Spain in mind, a democratic relationship between the various ranks was encouraged.

Thus, in a few weeks, the face of Britain was transformed. War-restrictions were introduced over-night, supplies of the necessities and normal luxuries of existence were increasingly curtailed, and the British people were projected suddenly into a set of experiences which were altogether strange to them. This transformation involved a colossal task, and in several directions the disorganization and chaos were acute. Had it been possible for Hitler to invade the British Isles within a few weeks of the Dunkirk disaster he would have met with little effective resistance. The delay gave the country time to sort out its confusions. Most of the population found themselves committed to war-work of various kinds, not only full-time munition-



labour, but duties which had to be carried out in spare time and in addition to their normal occupations. Not the least revolutionary feature of this transformation was the mobilization of women for war-service. Women were enrolled in the Air Transport Auxiliary, in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, in the W.A.A.F., in the W.R.N.S., in the Women's Land Army, and in a large number of civilian services whose male employees had been called up. In some cases women manned anti-aircraft guns and were trained to work on balloon-barrage stations. Women were also trained for such varied duties as range-finding, wireless, radiolocation, flight-mechanic duties, as armourers, manning tenders and ferry boats, dispatch-riding and kine-theodolite operations. In the previous war the services of women had been to some small extent enlisted: but now, in this totalitarian struggle, their responsibilities were vastly extended. The intensive mobilization of the British nation was rapidly introducing changes so profound as to be essentially revolutionary in effect.

### *The Air-attack on Britain*

What form would the German attack on Britain take? The Nazi Command wisely determined that no military operations were feasible until mastery of the air had been attained, and, as in Poland, the defending forces were blinded and such units of the Navy as could oppose the passage of the invading troops put out of action. On August 8, 1940, the air-attack opened, two convoys being attacked in the neighbourhood of the Isle of Wight. Sixty enemy aircraft were employed in the first attack, and more than one hundred and thirty in the second. In the first attack two British ships were sunk, and in the second the convoy was dispersed.

Encouraged by the comparative success of these operations mass-attacks were launched on Dover and the Isle of Wight on August 12, 1940. Two hundred aircraft flew over Dover in eleven waves, and a hundred and fifty appeared over Portsmouth and the Solent. During the following days, while the attacks on the coast from Kent to Portland were maintained, aerodromes in the South East

and South of England also became objectives. Goering was evidently relying on the weight of superior numbers. The main types of German bombers were the Ju 87 (dive bombers), the Ju 88, the Heinkel 111, the Dornier 215, and the Dornier 17. The lighter escorts were composed of the Me 109 and the Me 110, together with a few Heinkel 113 monoplanes. In the first stage of the battle the enemy tactics were usually to attack coastal targets and to attempt to draw off British fighters in their defence. Less than an hour later a more formidable attack would be made on ports and aerodromes in the south-easterly and southern areas.

The British coastline defences were divided up into sectors, each possessing their own fighter aerodromes and headquarters. Squadrons were kept either in a 'released' state, or 'available,' or on 'stand-by'—the last order meaning that pilots were actually seated in their planes, ready to take off at a moment's notice. Although the burden of action was distributed as far as possible throughout all squadrons, the strain on all fighter-personnel during this period was immense. The British machines employed were mainly the Spitfire Mark I, the Hawker Hurricane Mark I, and the Boulton-Paul Defiant. Tactics of intercepting the attacking aircraft were constantly changed, and from the earliest stages of the battle the whole defence-organization was found to work admirably. Even more conspicuous was the superiority of British individual airmanship over the enemy. To no one was this superiority a greater surprise than to the German High Command. There is no doubt that Goering reckoned that his vastly superior numbers would crush British aerial resistance in a few weeks. But for the first time the German calculations went seriously awry. The enemy losses were so heavy as to be almost incredible. Between August 8 and 18 the Germans' aircraft casualties reached the figure of 697 against a British loss of 153. The Germans were compelled to desist, and there was a lull of five days before the next phase of the battle opened.

So far the attack had been directed mainly on the coastal area. The new attack commenced over the same zones but was extended farther inland. On August 24, 1940, 110 German bombers and fighters approached

Maidstone, but were driven back. Heavy attacks were made on Portsmouth and Southampton, over the Thames Estuary, and against various inland aerodromes in Kent and Essex. On September 2 an enemy force penetrated within ten miles of London. But the general course of the battle was no more favourable to the Germans than the opening phase. Far from 'grounding' the British fighters, the German bombers were evidently becoming increasingly panic-stricken by the onslaught of the Spitfires and Hurricanes. Their inclination to engage in conflict was seen to be diminishing. They tended to break up their formations and turn tail whenever a strong force of British fighters approached. Even though the German numerical superiority was still so formidable that they could afford to lose heavily, such losses as they were now incurring could not be indefinitely sustained. During the thirty-five formation attacks of this period 562 enemy aircraft were known to have been destroyed against a British loss of 219, 132 British pilots of these machines being saved.

Goering was therefore compelled again to alter his plans, and this latter change of plan was significant. The first condition, that of putting aerodromes out of action and of crushing the British fighter strength, had not been fulfilled. The new target was to be the industrial centres of England, and particularly London. On September 7 waves of 20 to 40 bombers approached the metropolis, escorted not only by the usual bodyguard of fighters but by a ceiling of fighters flying at a high altitude. Between September 7 and October 5 thirty-eight major day attacks were launched, the battle-fields being over Greater London, Southampton and Kent. Night-attacks had by now greatly increased, and coastal ports and shipping were visited as diversionary measures. The German losses were even greater than before. On a single day, September 15, no less than 185 enemy aircraft were lost. From many parts of the country came eye-witnesses' accounts of thrilling episodes where one or more German planes had crashed almost at their doorstep. One Dornier fell just outside Victoria Station, its crew alighting by parachutes on Kennington Oval, while the British pilot responsible landed safely in Chelsea. During these thirty-one days the enemy total losses had amounted to 883 aircraft. During the

whole battle (August 8 to October 31) the destruction of German aircraft was at least 2,375 and probably even greater.

The Germans had lost the Battle of Britain, and the importance of this solitary British victory can hardly be over-emphasised. It saved Britain from invasion and therefore, at this stage, it saved the world from total disaster. It meant that Germany had now to face a prolonged war, a prospect which was far from agreeable to her leaders. The Battle of Britain was a turning-point in the struggle insofar as it destroyed all hope of an immediate German triumph. Although the possibility of an actual invasion could not be discounted the weeks passed and the Nazis dared not take the risk. The British authorities, indeed, had prepared devices of so ingenious and deadly a character that any military landing on these shores would have resulted in enormous losses to the enemy. Plans, for example, had been perfected for setting up a wall of fire over the sea through which the disembarking troops would have had to pass. News of this and of other such defences reached the Germans and spread some panic among the Nazi contingents which were being trained to face these ordeals. Many of these stories became fantastically exaggerated, and their repercussion in this country took the form of rumours that an invasion had actually been attempted and repulsed. Thousands of scorched German bodies were said to have been washed up on various coast-lines. There was, however, no more foundation for this story than for the descriptions of Russian troops passing through England on their way to the Western Front, which had circulated so freely in 1914. The Germans had, accordingly, to rely on indirect measures, on the Atlantic sea-war and on night-bombing. Preparations for military invasion were still pursued on the French coast, and some of these manœuvres received the attention of British naval vessels and bomber aircraft. But Britain had been saved, and her preservation was due mainly to the skill and bravery of British airmen, the efficiency of ground organization and the quality of the British machines. "Never," said Mr Churchill in the House of Commons on August 20, "in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

The Battle of Britain did not end at any given moment. It subsided into a decreasing number of small daylight attacks. But the main weight of the Nazi air-arm was now being directed to night-flying, and consequently the nature of the air-war was transformed. In night-attacks defensive operations are so difficult that at most only a small proportion of the attacking forces can be destroyed or driven back. On the other hand, the bombing operations can no longer be directed against specific targets. Towns, not aerodromes, a whole area and not particular buildings, become the objective, and consequently the enemy can reckon only on causing general damage and possibly of lowering the civilian morale. The Germans were now driven to resort to these tactics.

London was the chief victim, or the victim whose ordeal was most continuous. The first large-scale night raid took place on Saturday, September 7, thus overlapping the later phases of the daylight battles. Riverside fires were started in the early evening of that day in the dockland area, and acted as guides for the main attacks an hour later. The casualties were high. 400 persons were killed and some 1,400 seriously injured. On the following night the raid lasted from 8-0 p.m. till 5-0 a.m. and the enemy forces carried their indiscriminate attack farther into the heart of London. From now onwards London was visited regularly, with a few slight intervals, until May 10, 1941.

At first the relief organization was deplorable. No adequate provision had been made by the responsible authorities for the homeless, for any shelter or food-supply, or for any semblance of sanitation in the public shelters. The scenes in those earlier days were those of an indescribable confusion, especially in the east-end which at first suffered most severely. The authorities had had warning of the danger since the Munich-crisis of 1938, but they had made little preparation, and had not private individuals, clergymen and ministers conspicuously among them, with the help of hastily organised voluntary services, taken over the work, provided halls and guided the crowds into temporary shelters, the chaos would have been complete. Some indication of the official inability to deal with the situation is revealed by the fact that Sir John Anderson at the beginning of the war had decreed that tube-stations would

be closed directly a raid was announced. Actually, inasmuch as they provided the only available deep-shelters, they became the chief refuge for London inhabitants and were eventually, under Mr Herbert Morrison, equipped with bunks, lavatory accommodation, canteens and nurses. Platform-space was allotted, and even the stairways and escalators were used. By dusk each day thousands of men, women and children, would arrive at their particular tube-station and make ready to spend the night in safety from the terror.

If the London refuge-organization was at first deplorable, the lack of provision made by most of the provincial authorities was no less reprehensible. Indeed, here the fault was even less excusable, since in most cases these cities were not attacked until some time after the London raids had commenced and experience of how to meet the appalling difficulties were at their disposal. In Birmingham, for example, most of the public shelters were dripping with damp, the only decent refuges being those provided by private institutions. But the untiring energy and initiative of groups of individuals and, in some cases, of parochial, local bodies was magnificent. Suddenly, at a few hours' notice, a country town or village would be faced with the problem of providing sanctuary for hundreds of men, women and children, whose homes and belongings had been totally destroyed. Halls, churches, schools and private houses were hastily improvised to meet the invasion. From Portsmouth crowds trekked through the frosty night to the outlying villages even twenty miles away. Liverpool victims were accommodated as far afield as Southport. 35,000 were rendered homeless in Coventry alone.

The incessant night raids upon London left deep scars on the face of the city. Many familiar landmarks were reduced to ruins. A bomb crashed through the roof of the choir of St Paul's, partially destroying the high altar. Holland House, Middle Temple Hall, the Temple church, Chelsea old church, Stationers' Hall, the House of Commons, Sloane Square station, St Lawrence Jewry and the Guildhall were a few of the buildings totally or partially razed to the ground. Although London covers so large an area that the havoc was not so immediately noticeable as in the smaller cities, hardly a street was left without some

traces of demolition, while in such districts as part of the east-end, Battersea, and the streets round St Paul's there were exposed whole spaces of debris with no buildings standing intact. A large proportion of this wreckage was due to fire spread by incendiary bombs, and here, once again, a lack of official provision was responsible. Both the Temple and the City of London destruction were widespread because on the nights that they occurred there were few residents within reach and the buildings were well ablaze before any attempt to fight the flames was made. It was not until December 31, 1940, that Mr Morrison organised a system of compulsory fire-watching, at first for all business-premises, and then for each block of buildings and streets both in residential and commercial areas in towns and suburbs. A rota of men and women for duty each night had to be drawn up.

Though London remained the chief target, the raids through the autumn and winter of 1940 covered most of England. Widescale damage was caused in Plymouth, Hull, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Portsmouth, Southampton, Swansea, and a number of other centres. On the night of November 14 five hundred enemy planes—according to the German account—attacked Coventry, causing over a thousand casualties and destroying the medieval cathedral; but this concentrated onslaught achieved comparatively little damage on the outlying munition factories. Coventry was heavily bombed a second time on April 8, 1941. Few parts of England and Wales escaped attention. The Nazis claimed that up to the end of September 1940, 22,580 tons of bombs had been dropped on Britain. During the first half of September 2,000 people were killed in London, the total casualties numbering 10,000. Subsequent statistics issued by the Ministry of Home Security showed that of the provincial towns most heavily raided the total number of civilians killed up to the end of 1941 had been 4,100 in Liverpool and Merseyside, 2,162 in Birmingham, 1,236 in Coventry, 1,159 in Bristol and Avonmouth, 1,005 in Manchester and Salford, 1,073 in Plymouth, 1,828 in Clydeside, and 1,055 in Hull.

The significance of this abandonment of big-scale day-attack was that for the first time the Germans had been checked in their war-programme. The fact that they were

forced to rely on night-bombing meant that their losses in aircraft were economised and that the large escorts of fighters could be dispensed with: but it meant also that they could no longer hope to overcome the British air-force and directly to paralyse production. The most which night-bombing tactics could achieve was indirect interference with communications, occasional lucky hits on vital centres of production, and the lowering of civilian morale. In none of these objectives were the raids sufficiently successful to justify the huge expenditure in mechanical and human energy which they involved. The railway and postal services suffered periods of partial dislocation, but grappled magnificently against the odds. Repairs to the railway permanent-way and to London termini were commenced as soon as daylight broke. Munition factories resumed work even when roofs and glass had been shattered by explosive bombs. Often under conditions involving supreme heroism time-bombs were removed, and the fire-brigades were coping with the conflagrations while the raid was still at its fiercest. No record can adequately describe the courage and untiring efforts of men and women who, even while the bombing was in progress, drove lorries through the darkened streets and commenced their tasks of excavation and rescue. Nor can justice be done to the countless number of those who, both in London and the provinces, endured extreme privation without complaint. Frequently the raids would result in the destruction for days of water-supply, electricity and gas. In Portsmouth a large proportion of the shops were destroyed, thus reducing the population temporarily to the threat of actual starvation. But the spirit of the people was not defeated. Hitherto, in all the horrors of modern aerial warfare, in China, in Spain, in Holland, in Germany and in Finland, bombing has never achieved any decisive effect on the morale of the population. The British showed themselves as competent as any other nation to endure the ordeal without flinching. The weekly broadcasts of Mr J. B. Priestley exactly symbolised the mood of Britain during this period of holocaust. Gradually it became evident to the Nazi Command that victory was not to be achieved by these terrorist tactics. The British anti-aircraft defences, both of artillery and fighter planes, were steadily becoming more efficient. The nightly toll of



enemy raiders increased. On March 15, 1941, for example, it was reported that the official total of enemy bombers as brought down was thirty-four in four nights. These, and other considerations, induced the enemy to divert his air-arm to other uses. After one of the heaviest attacks on London during the night of May 10, 1941, the air-war over Britain ceased for many months, broken only by occasional and markedly slighter raids. The weight of the German air-arm was required in other theatres of war, and the fact that this transference became necessary was itself proof that the Battle of Britain had foiled the immediate Nazi programme.

## CHAPTER 5

### ITALIAN DEFEATS AND THE GROWTH OF AMERICAN AID

#### *The Italian campaign in Greece*

THE fact that the German bombers by the autumn of 1940 had been compelled to resort mainly to night-attack indicated, as has been stated, a dislocation of the Nazi programme. It also invited night-bombing activity on the part of the British. British aircraft had begun at once to retaliate by bombarding German industrial areas, and on August 25, 1940, raided Berlin. Berlin and other German towns were bombed regularly during the autumn of that year. Flights were even undertaken over North Italy, but as yet none of these offensives could claim to be as deadly as the raids over London and the provinces. Their direct effect were little more than of 'nuisance' value and, in this preliminary stage, a challenge to German assurance insofar as they refuted Goering's original boast to the German people that British planes could never penetrate the German defences. But at present they could be little more than a gesture, a witness that Britain, far from being impotent in the air, was gradually, by her own and American effort, increasing her air-strength. During June and July, 1940, 3,500 tons of bombs were dropped on Germany. In the concentrated raid on Coventry on November 14, 1940, 500 tons of high-explosive bombs had been released. In June-July of 1941 the British figures had risen to 8,500 tons, while for the equivalent months of 1942 the total reached 13,000 tons.

This growing capacity to intensify the air-attack on Germany led ultimately to the emergence of two rival schools of thought among the strategists. The Government view was that the effect of these attacks was sufficiently effective to warrant sacrificing air-strength in the distant military theatres of war. Government spokesmen were continually drawing attention to the mass-strength which these raids on enemy territory would eventually attain, and

it was evident that they were relying on this arm as one of the decisive factors in bringing about a German collapse. On October 7 the raid over Berlin lasted for five hours, and on the following day Mr Churchill announced that more damage was being done to Germany than she was inflicting on Britain. There was a certain amount of popular clamour among the British public for reprisals, for sheer indiscriminate bombing of non-military targets in retaliation for the devastation inflicted on English towns and villages. American and a considerable body of unofficial British opinion drew, however, a different conclusion, urging that large-scale attacks were a certain waste of effort, and that bombers could be more usefully employed in the field of military operations. It is significant that both the Soviet Union and Germany, after their experience in Spain, ceased to regard long-term bombing as decisive. The Soviet Government decided to reduce the construction of large Gorki bombers, and the Nazi generals successfully opposed Goering's scheme for an independent Air Force. The value of aerial attack could be justified, in fact, only by its effect on morale and on production. So far there had been no evidence to show that, even where the bombing was most continuous and ruthless, the morale of any people, Chinese, Spanish, Polish, British or German, had reached breaking-point. As for the effect on production, factories which had been severely damaged were found to be capable of resuming work in a surprisingly short space of time. The most that could be claimed for the bombing-operations of the R.A.F. in 1940 and 1941 was a temporary dislocation of enemy communications, delay of production and occasional confusion.

Meanwhile, German plans for the destruction of Britain having been thwarted, Hitler was compelled to seek other outlets for his energies. His meeting with Mussolini in the Brenner Pass on October 4, followed by his interview with Laval on the 22nd, foreshadowed a coming offensive. But the offensive was no longer to be staged in the west: it was to be directed eastwards across the Balkans. The British fleet must be weakened in the Mediterranean and the way opened for a drive into Iran, Suez and Egypt. The rich properties of Rumania and other Balkan States must be put at Germany's disposal. The significance of

these plans was its revelation that the enemy was now compelled to contemplate a long war. Oil-supply must be increased, in particular, and the sweep of Nazi conquest extended before American support for Britain had become a serious menace. By October 16 Mr Eden had arrived in Egypt to confer with General Wavell, Commander of the British Middle East Forces. On the same day the House of Commons voted a further war-credit of £1,000,000,000. Sir Kingsley Wood stated that British war-expenditure now exceeded £9,000,000 a day.

It was evident that the initial operations in the new campaign had been entrusted to Italy, and it is probable that the insistence that Italy must be otherwise occupied than in seizing coveted French trophies was used as a bait for French co-operation in the conversations between Hitler and Laval. On October 28, 1940, on the expiration of a three-hour ultimatum, demanding the right of an occupation of various strategic points and with the usual hackneyed Axis profession of 'guaranteeing' neutrality, Italian troops invaded Greece. On the same day King George VI. sent a message to King George II. of Greece—"we are with you in this struggle," and Mr Churchill cabled to General Metaxas, "We will give you all the help in our power."

The Italian attack on Greece was from the first inglorious. The Greeks surprised the world not only by the gallantry but by the effectiveness of their resistance. The immediate Italian objective was Yanina, while a further attack was launched in the north-east towards Florina. The object of the latter undertaking was to obtain possession of the road to Salonika. The Italians, however, made heavy weather of their advance, and meanwhile the Greeks had commenced a counter-offensive, penetrating before the end of the first week some three miles into Albania. Greek planes bombed the Koritza aerodrome, and on November 2 Greek infantry at the point of the bayonet seized important hill-positions overlooking Koritza. The Italians made several attempts to recapture these positions, not only failing to do so but sustaining heavy losses in their subsequent retirement. So successful were the Greeks in this sector that within a few days Koritza was being shelled by Greek guns. In the western area the Italians

were at first more fortunate. They crossed the Kalamas and pushed on into the defiles of the Pindus mountains. The Greeks allowed this advance to continue, leaving the Aoos valley temptingly open and sending their mountaineer troops by difficult passes, carrying only the lightest weapons. On November 8 the Italian Command suddenly awoke to the possibility that their advance forces were being entrapped, and sent two more regiments to extricate the threatened division. The Greeks descended from the heights and closed the exits, flinging themselves on the enemy rear. The Italians found themselves surrounded. Whole platoons flung away their arms and plunged into the icy waters of the Aoos, only to be swept downstream by the current and drowned. The advance had led to complete disaster. 24,000 of the crack Alpine troops were killed, taken prisoner or devoured by wolves. The Italian Command was so unprepared for this fiasco and so unaware of the actual situation that they sent over planes to drop stores on Metsovo, assuming that it had been captured.

A reverse on this scale usually leads to a change of generalship. General Soddu was at once appointed to the Albanian Command, in order to restore order among the demoralised troops. But the Duce's inglorious adventures were not yet at an end. On November 11 he was 'permitted' by Goering to send a strong force of Italian bombers to raid the south-east of Britain. Two Hurricane squadrons shot down thirteen of these Italian planes without any loss to themselves. On the same evening the Italian fleet was attacked at the port of Taranto. Aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm partially sank or severely damaged three battleships, put two cruisers and two fleet auxiliaries out of action. On Mr Churchill's estimate the result of this raid was to reduce Italy's naval strength by one-half. A convoy of four Italian supply ships on their way to Albania were heavily engaged on the same day, only one of them escaping. On November 13 the R.A.F. inflicted further damage on Taranto.

British troops had already been landed in Greece, and meanwhile the Greeks continued to press forward in Albania. On November 22 the Italians admitted that they had been compelled to abandon Koritza with "considerable losses." The R.A.F., on the invitation of the Greek General

Staff, contributed to the Italian rout by bombing Italian supplies. In spite of bad weather British Blenheims took heavy toll of the Pogradets-Koritza road. The Greeks captured Pogradets by November 30 and commenced an advance along the coast-road towards Argyrokastró on the Epirus front. On December 3 Italy had lost all Southern Albania, the Greeks occupying the port of Santi Quaranta and still pressing on towards Valona. Immense supplies of ammunition, tanks and stores had fallen into Greek hands. That the Italian defeat had attained serious proportions was indicated by the announcement on December 6 that Marshal Badoglio had resigned his position as Supreme Commander of the Italian Army. Two days later the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Cavagnari, followed his example. General Soddu retired on January 12, having held his post only for two months. A counter-offensive launched by his successor, General Cavallero, was no more successful. By the middle of February the Greeks had gained all their immediate objectives and had in their latest attack taken over 7,000 prisoners. A mountain stronghold, considered by the Italians to be impregnable, was captured.

But from now onwards the Greek triumph was to become a tragedy. This gallant army had inevitably to meet a far more deadly foe than Mussolini's legions.

### *German invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece*

The Italian fiasco was a serious embarrassment to the Nazi Command. Hitler's failure to deal a knock-out blow to Britain had forced him already to make his plans for an attack on the Soviet Union, and these plans necessitated co-operation—or, at least, neutrality—in the Balkans. Some observers have held that Mussolini's invasion of Greece was undertaken without Hitler's assent, but it is unlikely that the Duce, in the subservient position in which he now found himself, would have dared so to incur the displeasure of his master. It is certain, however, that a defiant and victorious Greece was a challenge which Hitler could not afford to ignore. If Italy could not even carry out the preliminary tasks of occupying the key-points in the south-east, Germany must come to her rescue.

The first moves in the new offensive were the inclusion of Hungary and Rumania by pact in the Axis orbit.

These pacts were signed in November 1940, and in despair the Hungarian premier, Count Teleki, committed suicide on April 3. Bulgaria resisted the pressure until the following March. Turkey refused to abandon her neutrality. The position of Turkey was, indeed, peculiarly delicate. In October 1939, she had signed a defensive treaty with the Allies, under the terms of which she accepted military assistance if she were attacked, subject to the proviso that she was not to be drawn thereby into conflict with the Soviet Union. As the struggle developed, one of the main theatres of war was at her doorstep, and, in order to play for safety she found herself compelled to adopt friendly relations with Germany: she signed a 'treaty of friendship' with Germany on June 18, 1941. These political moves in the Balkans met with a significant reaction in the Soviet Union. In June 1940, Moscow had demanded the return of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina: Bessarabia had been taken from the Soviet Union by Rumania in 1918. The reasons for this acquisition were as obvious as had been the incorporation of the Baltic States. Rumanian anger at the seizure of Bessarabia led to the fall of the Government and the abdication of King Carol, who was succeeded by his son, Michael.

On November 22, 1940, the Moscow radio officially denied the rumour that Hungary had joined the Axis with the "full consent and collaboration of the Soviet Government." When Bulgaria surrendered to the Axis Moscow observed that, far from helping to preserve peace in the Balkans, Bulgaria's decision was likely to extend the conflict and involve Bulgaria herself. On March 4, 1941, Berlin replied to this comment by stating that "it must be understood that Germany can in no way tolerate any restrictions on measures she deems necessary to defeat Britain."

But it was Yugoslavia on whom Nazi pressure was mainly directed. Yugoslavia was the obvious base from which to operate in order to subdue Greece and avenge the humiliating Italian defeat in Albania. It was on March 10, 1941, that Germany demanded Belgrade's submission to the Axis. These demands included the right of Germany to transport men and war-material through the country.

Despite violent protest from the majority of the Serb population, the Government decided not to resist but to surrender. Early on the morning of March 27, however, a revolt broke out in Belgrade which resulted in the overthrow of the ministers who had signed the pact with Germany. Prince Paul, the Regent, fled, the pro-Axis ministers were arrested, and the young King Peter formed a new Government. Britain had somewhat unexpectedly obtained a new ally, and immense enthusiasm was aroused in London at this latest example of a small State determining to resist the Axis infiltration.

Yet, once again, the experience of Yugoslavia was to illustrate the dire consequences of suddenly entering into war without preparation and previous negotiations with the forces opposing the Axis. It was the same story as that which had resulted in the catastrophe of Norway, Holland and Belgium, and in this instance the rapid invasion of Yugoslavia produced an immediate deterioration in the Greek situation. The Nazi army invaded Yugoslavia on April 6, and Belgrade was subjected to heavy aerial bombardment. Simultaneously, the enemy advanced down the valley of the river Struma and crossed the Grecian frontier.

It may be argued that, even if Greece and Yugoslavia had decided at the outbreak of the war to throw in their lot with the Allies, Britain could have rendered them no more assistance than in fact they received. This is true, so far as isolated States are concerned. The moral is rather that had all the neutral States, whose freedom was to be violated, united together from the first against the Nazi threat, the course of the struggle might have been very different. As it was, Britain could do nothing to aid the gallant Yugoslavian defence. By April 9 the Germans were in occupation of Uskub and Nish, and entered Salonika the same day. Hungarian troops participated in the invasion of Yugoslavia and were severely censured by Moscow for doing so. In a few days the formal struggle was at an end, though Yugoslavian guerilla-bands continued to harass the Nazi troops continuously throughout the war. Under General Mihailovich an organised force, mainly composed of Serbs, carried on a continuous campaign of sabotage. The Italians attempted to meet this danger by playing the Serbs, who are Orthodox in religion, against the Roman



Catholic Croats. By the summer of 1942, however, both Croats and Slovenes were pursuing their own guerilla tactics against the common enemy. A secret radio station, named 'Free Yugoslavia,' broadcasted daily bulletins. Yugoslavia was occupied by the enemy, but never conquered. Nevertheless, towards the end of 1942 a confused situation had developed. It became apparent that the real guerilla warfare was being waged by forces for which Mihailovich was not responsible and to which he was indeed opposed. The 'Free Yugoslavia' radio station declared on October 5, 1942, that Mihailovich's 'Chetnik' troops were even co-operating with German and Italian Fascists in Bosnia against the peasant rebels. Once more the position seemed to be that the Serbian landlords preferred the invader to the people and found themselves on the Fascist side, once an agrarian revolution was threatened. The British Government, however, continued to regard Mihailovich as an ally and on December 12, 1942, requested the Yugoslav Government to forward its congratulations to him: it was not until some time later that Britain became convinced of his treachery.

Greece was now in dire peril. A small British force had been sent to Greece directly the German forces entered Bulgaria. This force was supplemented by troops drawn from Egypt, a move which seriously affected the fortunes of that Libyan campaign which is presently to be recorded. As early as November 1940, British troops had been landed in Crete, an island of obviously great strategic importance. That there could be no ultimate hope of stemming the Nazi advance was evident from the first, but it was felt that, whatever the sacrifice entailed in Libya, Britain must stand by the Greeks in their final agony. The tragic irony of this phase of the war was that the complete triumph of the Greeks over the Italians provoked the intervention of Germany and was thus turned into defeat. The Imperial troops, including Australians and New Zealanders, were now engaged in desperate fighting alongside their Greek allies, and R.A.F. bombers continuously harassed the German advance. But the end was already in sight. In view of the German advance from Yugoslavia and the peril of the Greek position in Albania, a new front had been formed by April 15 from Salonika to the Adriatic. Day by day the

Allies were compelled to retreat. On April 20 British Imperial forces evacuated Mount Olympus and fell back on defensive positions south of Lamia. On April 23 the Greek army of Epirus was cut off by the Germans and capitulated to the Italians. On the same day the King and Greek Government left Athens for Crete. By April 25 the Germans had seized the island of Lemnos, and by the end of April British forces were being evacuated. 44,865 were withdrawn out of 57,757.

But the fiercest stage of this campaign was yet to be fought. By May the Germans were attacking Crete in full force. 1,500 German troops were landed by parachute on the morning of May 20, 1941. Nazi planes in incredible quantities were flown across to the island, 3,000 airborne troops being transported in a single day. Once again, although the British fought bravely, they were no match against the reckless fury of these *blitzkrieg* attacks. Wave after wave of gliders deposited their human cargoes. No sufficient attempt seems to have been made to defend the Maleme aerodrome, which fell into enemy hands on the 22nd and thus vastly strengthened the enemy position. The R.A.F. were placed at a grave disadvantage, and the Mediterranean fleet which was vigorously attempting to intercept the Nazi landing suffered serious losses. Two British cruisers and four destroyers were sunk in the week ending May 24. The anti-aircraft cruiser *Calcutta*, and two more destroyers were sunk in the following week. The British wounded, missing and prisoners amounted to 15,000. 17,000 British troops were evacuated on May 31. The German losses must have been as many as 17,000, but they had taken Crete. The moral of this brief and desperate struggle was that the British had paid heavily for their failure to provide defences for the Cretan landing-grounds. Once the enemy had captured these, the R.A.F. were working with all the odds against them. Mr Churchill had to face an anxious and angry House of Commons on June 10, the only explanation of why the Nazis had been able to seize the island, without command of the sea and with all the disadvantage of having to transport troops by air, being that the British troops were given an altogether inadequate air-support.

*The first campaigns in North Africa*

The Italian army was to prove no more formidable in North Africa than in Greece. In September 1940, an Italian force had crossed the Egyptian frontier but had been unable to advance beyond Sidi Barrani. At that time the British defences, owing to the fall of France, were far from strong, and a vigorous invasion of Egypt would have proved a serious menace. Reinforcements to the Middle East, were, however, proceeding apace, and on December 9, 1940, while Mussolini's troops were being driven by the Greeks in ignominious retreat along the Albanian roads, the British Middle East Command decided to launch an offensive. At the time few people suspected to how small a force the undertaking of this offensive had been entrusted. Here, certainly, a policy of vigorous thrust, even at serious risk, was well chosen, and it was cheering that for the first time in the war the British should be deliberately undertaking offensive operations.

The British operations were immediately successful. Sidi Barrani was taken on December 11, and 35,000 prisoners with a number of tanks and other equipment were captured. In a week the Italians had been completely cleared out of Egypt. Sollum and Fort Capuzzo were occupied by the British on the 16th, while Naples, the Tunisian frontier depots and all the aerodromes along the Libyan coast were visited by British bombers. The Navy attacked Valona and the harbour at Bardia. The Italians defended Bardia with some vigour, even when it had become isolated, but on January 5 it capitulated with 25,000 prisoners. Two days later the British forces were pushing on towards Tobruk, which fell on January 22. From then onwards the Italians seem to have had little fight left in them. On February 6, Benghazi, the second largest town in Libya, with airfield and port was captured. This exploit was a brilliant feat. The British had advanced 160 miles in seven days, one mechanised column, indeed, advancing 150 miles in thirty hours.

Simultaneously, the Italians had been battered in Somaliland. On February 26 it was announced that Mogadishu, the capital of the Italian Somaliland territory,

had fallen. Thousands of Italians surrendered in this region, their forces having become entirely demoralised by the surprisingly rapid British advance. South African troops and Air Force played a large part in these operations. In Abyssinia Mussolini's army put up a more stubborn resistance, but after a five months' strenuous campaign, in which the native Ethiopian troops played a vigorous part, the Emperor, Haile Selassie, returned to Addis Ababa (May 5, 1941). Five years had passed since the Italians had seized his city. On February 3, 1942, Mr Eden announced that diplomatic relations with the Emperor had been restored and that the British Government had undertaken to finance him to the extent of £1,500,000 in the first year, and £1,000,000 for the year following. On May 19, 1941, the Duke of Aosta, Italian Commander-in-Chief in East Africa, surrendered with 7,000 troops, and only a few isolated outposts remained in the enemy's hands.

By this series of offensives Mussolini's North African Empire had been shattered. Speaking at a Fascist rally on February 23, 1941, the Duce admitted that of his two armies sent to Libya one had been completely lost, and the Fifth Air Squadron wiped out. This meant that one-tenth of the Italian army and one-fifth of the Air Force were now out of action. The Italian naval losses had also been considerable. Italy was defeated, and in the ordinary course it is obvious that full advantage should have been taken of that defeat. It was hoped that General Wavell might now feel able to press the attack on Tripoli and thus advance a step further towards freeing the Mediterranean. An invasion of Italy itself might then have been possible, but, as was to happen so repeatedly in the history of the war, British resources were so limited and were subjected to so many demands upon them that the British Command dared not seize the initiative to any decisive extent. The result was invariably a dissipation of British strength in theatres which the enemy invariably chose for his own purposes. It was Greece that now appealed for help, and help could come only by drawing on those Middle East forces which might have driven the Italians finally from the African continent. The opportunity was lost. On March 24, General Rommel, who had taken over the Libyan Command with a force composed of Germans as well as

Italians, commenced a counter-offensive and recaptured El Agheila, occupying the Halfaya Pass three weeks later. By April 1941, it had become evident that German troops with equipment were already reinforcing the retreating Italians in large numbers. The British Navy, strained already to the utmost in its vain attempts to save Crete, could do little to prevent transports crossing the Central Mediterranean, although occasional convoys were sunk and Tripoli was heavily bombarded on April 22. By April 10 the Germans claimed to have taken 2,000 prisoners in Libya, including three generals. By the 17th the former position had been completely reversed. Nazi mechanised forces were now advancing towards the Egyptian frontier and now launching repeated attacks on Tobruk. Most of the positions, except Tobruk, which had been captured with such sensational rapidity from the Italians, were now retaken by the Germans. Once more the Egyptian frontier was crossed, though the enemy forces did not penetrate as far as Sidi Barrani. As in Greece, the Nazis retrieved what the Italians had lost.

This Libyan desert battlefield was to see a number of further strange, swaying movements as the British and their enemies alternatively advanced and retreated. At the moment, however, the summer heat put an end to major operations. The British had gained the important fortress and harbour of Tobruk, but they had failed to bring Italy to her knees. The threat to the Suez through Syria, and farther east through Iran, now became acute. General Auchinleck succeeded General Wavell on July 1 as Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East, General Wavell being appointed as Commander in India. At the same time it was announced that Mr Oliver Lyttleton had been included in the War Cabinet to represent the Middle East. But by this time an entirely new phase of the war had been opened up.

### *The Neutral States*

What in general were the prospects of Britain and the Dominions at the close of this phase of the world-struggle? The enemy onslaught had been switched from the attack

on Britain herself to the Middle East. The Italians had shown themselves no match for the Greeks, and a great part of their African empire had been taken from them. On the other hand the heroic Greek army had been crushed, Greece and Yugoslavia occupied by the enemy, and Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria caught up in the Axis clutches. Crete had been lost, and the eastern portions of the Mediterranean, although the Italian navy was severely weakened, were troubled waters for the British fleet. In the Far East Japan had still failed to bring the long-drawn Chinese campaign to a successful conclusion, but at any moment might honour her alliance with Germany by an attack on Britain's Asiatic possessions. Britain could not afford, therefore, to withdraw any of her naval and military forces from that distant theatre. On April 13, 1941, it was announced that the Soviet Union and Japan had signed a pact of neutrality. There was much speculation in British and American quarters as to the significance of this agreement, but it was assumed that, although the Japanese Government had been shaken and displeased by the Nazi treaty with the Communist foe, Japan had been advised, or had herself determined, to keep herself free from hostile entanglements with the Soviet Union so as to be able to direct her activities elsewhere.

In the European sphere, Sweden, Portugal and Spain—with Turkey in the south-east corner—remained the only substantial neutrals. The British policy was concerned at all costs to keep Spain out of the Axis embrace, and Sir Samuel Hoare, a Right-wing politician with well-known Francoist sympathies, had been appointed ambassador at Madrid. Not only was the Franco Government heavily indebted to both Germany and Italy for its victory over the progressive forces, but Señor Serrano Suñer was in frequent consultation with Hitler, and there were imminent possibilities that at any moment Spain might become a threat to British security in the Western Mediterranean. Critics of the Government maintained that, particularly by the summer of 1942, it would have been more embarrassing to Hitler if Spain had been forced into an open breach with the Allies, and German reserves thus compelled to be withdrawn from France in order to meet a possible Allied offensive. The Churchill Government relied, however, on

two factors which in their view would compel Franco to avoid any open breach with British and American interests. The internal condition of Spain was too uneasy to allow him to abandon neutrality, and the economic distress of his country made him to some extent dependent on Anglo-American financial assistance. It is true that the British blockade was represented by Fascist propaganda as the main cause of the shortage of Spanish supplies, but in actuality it had become a safeguard of Spanish independence, since it enabled Spain to emphasise the impossibility of her abandoning her neutrality. Moreover, from the end of 1940, when Señor Carceller became Minister of Industry and Trade, business relations with Britain developed considerably and constituted a weight of vested interests against which the solicitations of Nazi agents were ineffective.

The immediate threat of the German push was clearly, however, at this stage, Egypt and Near Asia. With Crete as a base Syria was within reach, and from Syria the oil-fields of Iraq, and ultimately the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, were obvious objectives. The first step to be taken in order to challenge this advance must therefore be Syria.

Syria was a French mandate and remained under the jurisdiction of Vichy. On May 15, 1941, Mr Eden told the House of Commons that the French were allowing German aircraft to use Syrian aerodromes. On the following day three of these aerodromes were attacked and heavily damaged by the R.A.F. This was the precursor of actual invasion, for there was no doubt that the Germans were arriving in Syria in considerable numbers. On June 8, Free French, Australian and Indian troops crossed the Syrian frontier from Palestine and Transjordan. Tyre was occupied without difficulty. Sidon fell on June 14, and other forces advanced towards Damascus. Efforts were made to induce French officers and men to join the Allies, but the results were disappointing. There was stubborn resistance round Damascus, which was entered by the Free French on June 21. Germany by now was otherwise occupied and could render no assistance. Early in July General Dentz, the French High Commissioner, applied for armistice terms, and on July 14 these were signed at Acre. Under these terms the French troops were offered service with the Free French forces or

repatriation to France. All aerodromes, military positions, artillery and equipment were surrendered, those not required by the British being destroyed by the French under British orders.

Meanwhile, a further obstacle to the probable German advance was established by a clear-up in Iraq. A new Government had been set up at Baghdad of strong pro-Axis sympathies. The country was seething with Nazi 'tourists' and the Prime Minister, Rashid Ali, was probably in Nazi pay. Here also vigorous action was taken. British forces closed on Baghdad, Rashid Ali fled to Iran, and on June 1 it was announced that an armistice had been granted, under the terms of which all Axis agents and combatants were to be interned.

The oilfields of Iraq were thus protected from seizure by the Axis. There remained the further danger of Iran, where enemy agents were also energetic and Nazi propaganda had been already at work for some time. Military pressure was applied in August 1941, by Soviet troops operating from the north, and British imperial forces advancing from the Persian Gulf and from Khanikin in the west. There was some resistance on the part of the Iran army, but here again the Germans were unable to anticipate the Allied move. Ali Feroughi, the new premier, ordered the 'cease fire' on August 27. The Allied terms involved the handing-over of Fifth Columnists and the use of oil and transport facilities. By these measures Britain admitted that in this war scrupulous regards for the rights of sovereign neutrality must be disregarded. Britain had been compelled to act much as the Soviet Union had acted in the Baltic States, with the result that the Nazi designs in this corner of Asia were effectively check-mated.

### *American assistance*

After the fall of France, and, indeed, from the moment of the declaration of war against Germany, it was clear that the fate of Britain must depend ultimately on the degree of support which the United States of America would be prepared to offer. Single-handed Britain could hardly hope to avert defeat. But if the enormous resources of



America were worked to full capacity and were placed sufficiently at her disposal she might be enabled to wage a long war and eventually to wear down the German machine. The U.S.A. was capable of proving a far mightier arsenal even than that afforded by the vast European territory now under Nazi control.

But to what extent would American help be forthcoming? The answer was focused mainly on President Roosevelt. His own sympathies with the British cause, and his realization that the safety of the U.S.A. was bound up wholly with the prospects of a British victory were unquestionable. But there were many elements in American political opinion which necessitated on his part a more cautious policy than he would personally have chosen. There was the resentment, not yet obliterated in some American circles, that Britain had largely defaulted in the repayment of debts incurred in the last war. There was the memory of President Wilson's unpopular attempt in 1919 to involve the U.S.A. in European affairs. And, consequently, there was a large party favouring non-intervention, minimising the danger of a German attack on the western hemisphere, and arguing that the distant struggle across the Atlantic was not America's war. In the American mind there has always been the conception, resting no doubt on considerable justification, of Europe as the antiquated continent, obsessed with feudal jealousies and torn by nationalist rivalries, evils which American democracy has happily avoided. Why then become involved in this welter of enmities? The United States, the non-interventionists declaimed, had not been responsible for the Munich-appeasement tactics which had landed Britain and France in disaster, and American lives and money should not be sacrificed to extricate them from the consequences of their own folly. Such advocates ignored the fact that their own isolationism bore a close resemblance to the Chamberlain policy of appeasement.

Moreover, even if America were to devote herself to the war-effort, it would be some time before production could be effective. The United States had not joined to any considerable extent in the rearmament race: whereas Germany had begun to build her war-machine in 1933 and Great Britain in 1936, the U.S.A. beyond a slight increase

in naval expenditure had made little preparation. Even when the war broke out in Europe she was spending only at the rate of £20,000,000 a month against the British £37,000,000. The speed of production in the U.S.A. largely depended on the sense of urgency in the mind of the American public. When Reynaud sent his despairing last appeal to Roosevelt the answer he received was inevitable. Whatever the eventual commitments of the U.S.A., it would be too late to save France. At any moment, it seemed, it might be too late to save Britain.

This was the issue essentially at stake in the presidential election of November 1940. For though the Republican candidate, Mr Willkie, stood also for the speeding up of production for Britain, Roosevelt was the symbol of the American will to support Britain to the full. When, therefore, on November 5, Mr Roosevelt, breaking all precedents, was elected for a third term of office, it was a proof that the longer-sighted elements in American society were in a political majority, and that from now onwards the U.S.A. would take a more definite share in the war-effort. Short of actual belligerency the U.S.A. was by 1941 an ally, pledged as completely as Britain to the overthrow of the monstrous Nazi domination.

The American support of Britain can accordingly be reckoned in clearly demarcated stages. In the first stage the Allies could order only such material as they could pay for in dollars, and there was the further restriction that they were compelled to carry the goods ordered in their own transport. The second phase dates from March 1941, when the Lease-Lend Act became law. Mr Churchill described this measure (March 12, 1941) as a "new Magna Carta for free men and free nations." A three-year plan for aiding Britain at a cost of £2,500,000,000 was drafted by Mr Roosevelt. The general result of the Act was to lift the earlier financial restrictions by waiving all claim to immediate payment. Already the sites of British Transatlantic possessions had been leased to America in return for American supplies. "The two great organizations of the English-speaking democracies," said Mr Churchill, "... will have to be somewhat mixed up in some of their affairs for mutual and general advantage. . . . I do not view the process with any misgivings. . . . Like the Mississippi, it just

keeps rolling along. . . Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant, to broader lands and better days." By 1942 the process had extended to a vast American economic penetration of British West Africa.

The next phase can be described as the lengthening of American naval protection for the convoys carrying supplies across the Atlantic. It was evident that the German reply to American assistance must take the form of submarine activity, and the experience of the previous war had shown how deadly this danger might become. Transport of Canadian troops, and of Americans after the U.S.A. entry into the war, was operated without loss, but the sinking of supply-transport reached critical proportions. The figures of these losses were not published in Britain, but were available to the American press. By the summer of 1942, even when American shipbuilding had risen to an enormous output, the number of sinkings was still higher than that of production. The British naval arm, with its heavy and widespread commitments, was clearly unable to cope with this deadly menace. In June 1941, American troops were landed in Greenland, Trinidad and British Guiana. On July 7 President Roosevelt announced that U.S.A. naval forces had arrived in Iceland, relieving the British forces which had been in occupation for some months, not, however, with the wholehearted approval of the Icelanders, who have always been jealous of their comparative independence. A still further valuable base in the struggle against the submarine danger would undoubtedly have been found in the sea-ports of Eire, but the Irish Government resolutely refused to abandon its neutrality. The attitude of Eire was determined partly by the usual fears of the small neutral, and also by her deep-seated suspicion of Britain. It was hoped at one time that an American naval occupation might avoid these susceptibilities, but the British Government was evidently of opinion that the value of Irish waters would be outweighed by the possibility of armed resistance. The German Legation was still carrying out its functions in Dublin and no doubt acting as a channel for considerable espionage activities. Dublin was bombed by the Germans on May 30, 1941, the death-roll amounting to thirty-four and the number of injured to over a hundred : but this was probably due to a

careless failure to distinguish between Belfast and the Irish capital.

The dependence of Britain upon American support rested mainly on the fortunes of the Battle of the Atlantic and upon the extent and speed of the American war-effort. This latter factor in turn was inevitably affected by the good relations between the two democracies. If the immense American potentialities were to be developed, not only must American opinion be converted to a sense of their own peril, but Britain must show herself to be worthy of the sacrifices which the American public would be compelled to make if the productive machine was to be switched over to war-purposes. The delicacy and urgency of ensuring this good relationship was not completely realised by Britain. In the earlier, and to some extent, later periods, American journalists were continuously irritated by the refusal of the Ministry of Information to release news which was already available from German sources and was utilised to the full by enemy propaganda. A bad impression was produced in America by the decision of the British Government to close the Burma Road, at Japanese request, for three months from July 18, 1940. The British case was that, though this road was the main artery by which supplies could be sent to China, the road during this season could not in any event be used to any great degree: and, also, with the Japanese in possession of Indo-China, Britain could not at this stage afford to risk further complications in the Far East. The American view, however, was critical on the ground that Britain was guilty of a further gesture of appeasement towards a Power which was likely eventually to become an active belligerent.

Clearly it had become of vital importance that the official British representative in the U.S.A. should be a personality welcome to American opinion. Considerable surprise was aroused, therefore, on both sides of the Atlantic when, on the death of Lord Lothian, Lord Halifax was appointed by the Churchill Government as ambassador. The President took the unprecedented course of himself meeting Lord Halifax in his yacht and taking him ashore on his arrival at Annapolis on January 24, 1941. Nevertheless, the appointment seemed unfortunate. Lord Halifax was identified in American eyes with the Munich policy,

and he represented that type of English aristocrat which arouses precisely those criticisms in the American mind which it was desirable, particularly at this juncture, to avoid. In spite of his obvious and sincere endeavours to adjust himself to American conditions, his traditions seemed too inbred to be sublimated. Those characteristics which had proved of great value in India were unlikely to evoke popularity in the United States. The American public was amused rather than impressed. Had Mr Lloyd George been younger and had felt able to accept this office, his appointment would have been more likely to meet the needs of the situation. A modern and democratic representative rather than the product of Eton and Oxford was required, and the choice seemed to indicate an inability on the part of Mr Churchill, in spite of his own immediate affinities with the American public, to appreciate the importance of this selection. Accordingly, it was greatly to the credit of Lord Halifax that he overcame these disadvantages sufficiently to prove a popular and successful ambassador.

British survival thus depended up to this point mainly on American energy. Hitler was now, however, to embark on an adventure which transformed the whole face of the war.

## CHAPTER 6

### WAR SPREADS TO THE SOVIET UNION

#### *Reasons for the invasion of Russia*

THE shadows which great events cast before them take sometimes a grotesque shape. The first public intimation of the change in Nazi policy was an incident which suggested the world of cinema rather than the grim realities of the mid-twentieth century. On the night of May 10, 1941, a solitary German pilot made a precarious landing in Scotland. He wandered in the darkness to a cottage where he was given food and handed over to the police. He had intended, according to his own story, to make contact with the Duke of Hamilton, whose estate was in the neighbourhood. This refugee was none other than Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess.

The incident was sufficiently sensational to provoke a crop of speculative rumour, but the British Government vouchsafed a minimum of information as to the true purpose of this strange adventure. It became evident, however, that Hess was the herald of important news of German plans. Hitler was now ready to attack the Soviet Union, and Hess was anxious to sound that section of British opinion which, he thought, might be favourable to co-operation or at least a policy of friendly neutrality in a Fascist drive against the forces of Communism. The Duke of Hamilton vigorously dissociated himself from the suggestion that he was in any way implicated in or sympathetic to such overtures, but previous history had so clearly revealed the presence of strong anti-Soviet influences within the British Right that Hess, although he had miscalculated his immediate personal objective, was probably justified in assuming that if he could get into touch with these near-Fascist elements his mission would not be fruitless. Those who regarded Moscow as the real enemy might be powerful enough to affect the British attitude, or, at the least, to provoke such disunity as to weaken a Government which was resolved to prosecute the war. Hess was unsuccessful only because the

Churchill Government was resolved to treat him strictly as a prisoner-of-war and to refuse him any audience with that not inconsiderable body of opinion which he desired to reach.

The only doubt as to Hess's exploit was whether he had embarked on his 900 mile flight from Augsburg with Hitler's connivance, or whether he had escaped because, in opposition to the Fuehrer, he was convinced that the attack on Russia should not be undertaken while hostilities with Britain were still in progress. The immediate reaction of Nazi propaganda was to declare that Rudolf Hess was insane. But this would have been in any case a normal precaution to prevent the Nazi dictatorship from becoming implicated in an unsuccessful peace-move. Had Hess achieved his object he would not have been disowned by his colleagues.

The real mystery concerns not Hess but Hitler himself. Why did Hitler choose this moment treacherously to violate the 1939 Pact and to precipitate himself into a war where for the first time he would encounter serious military resistance? It is true that the Soviet attitude was becoming increasingly restive in view of the penetration of German troops into the Balkans, and that most of the supplies from Russia which had been demanded by Germany were not forthcoming. It is true that the longer Hitler waited, the more opportunity he gave to the Soviet Union to build up its strength. It is true also that Hitler correctly estimated that a very long period would elapse before American production and British military strength would be sufficient to constitute a formidable menace in the West, so that he would be comparatively free to concentrate on an attack in the East. But when all such considerations have been taken into account the fact remains that here he blundered so signally as by this move to have forfeited a final victory. The cards were in his hands and he threw them away. And the nature of the blunder is self-evident. When at dawn on June 22, 1941, his armies marched towards Leningrad and the Ukraine, without even launching an ultimatum or offering an excuse for dishonouring the Pact, Hitler imagined that he was striking at a State so corrupt and at a people so slave-ridden that in three months at most the rich treasures of this vast European territory would be at his disposal and he would be able to face the prospect of war against the

slow-moving American machine with equanimity. He was utterly deceived. As events were to prove he was now at grips with a modernised efficient army and with a people so passionately devoted to their socialist regime that they would suffer agony and death rather than yield their land to the Nazi aggressor. The immense power of the Nazi war-weapon was to fritter away its strength, tanks and planes, and men were to be sacrificed in thousands, before even the first objectives could be reached. Britain in her critical isolation, with her hope of survival resting only on the long-term possibilities of effective American assistance, was presented with the most powerful ally in existence. Against the continuous series of Hitler's uncannily successful exploits must be set this colossal misjudgment, a madness which was ultimately to prove suicidal to Nazi schemes and a turning-point in the history of the world.

But if Hitler was guilty of misjudgment, the bulk of British and American opinion was equally at fault in estimating the possibilities of Soviet resistance. The result, indeed, of Hitler's blunder was at once to cause a confusion of sentiments throughout the major part of the British nation. British propaganda had been consistently at pains to insist on the failure of the Soviet repudiation of capitalist civilization and its traditions: the Russian economic experiment had been represented either as so disastrously incompetent that it was only maintained by the use of brutal violence, or as compelled by its failures to reverse to capitalist methods. When Finland was attacked, as we have seen, the Red Army was ridiculed in many responsible quarters as ineffective, ignorant, ill-equipped and ill-led. Both at the time of the Finnish war and when the Pact with Germany was signed, partisans of Conservatism and some Labour supporters openly declared that Stalin, rather than Hitler, was the real enemy. One London journal displayed in its windows a cartoon representing Hitler unlocking a cage from which a hideous man-ape, recognisable as Joseph Stalin, was escaping: this picture, which was an extreme expression of a very general trend in British thought, discreetly disappeared in June 1941. The Christian Churches generally represented the view that a system which was atheistical must be inherently evil and doomed to self-destruction. Never has a standpoint been



so entirely confuted by history. Stalin was suddenly transformed in English eyes from villain into hero. Those who had preached that Nazism and Bolshevism were indistinguishable were now compelled to admit that Bolshevism had become the direct barrier against Nazism. Those who had never hesitated to express their detestation of all that the Soviet Union stood for now found that the Soviet organization, strategy and heroism were their saviours. It was not only the Communist Party in Britain whose policy was turned upside down by Hitler's move: the moderate and extreme wings of Conservatism were also obliged to recognise their former enemy as the bulwark against defeat and slavery.

There was some danger that the strong prejudice against Soviet socialism, widespread in Britain and still more dominant in the United States, might become a dangerous embarrassment in the new situation. When news was first received of the German invasion there were expressions of delight in certain circles that Stalin should at last be paying the price for his past sins. This type of criticism was checkmated by Mr Churchill in an utterance which was far-reaching in effect not only on account of its statesmanlike quality but because it was delivered instantaneously. On the evening of that same eventful Sunday he broadcast an address, welcoming the Russians as allies and emphasising the determination of the Government to give full support to Moscow. In forty minutes he had shamed the critics of Russia into silence. The fact that this declaration of friendship and alliance was made by a leader who could not be suspected of possessing any Communist sympathies profoundly influenced public opinion not only in Britain but in America. Henceforward, the reactionary elements found themselves in a somewhat bewildering position. The military diehards who had regarded the Red Army at best as immature were compelled to admit that the Soviet forces, not only on account of their numbers, but by sheer efficiency of organization and strategy, were putting up a resistance of which neither the British nor French Commands had been capable. At Christian altars prayers were invoked for the success of the atheist Soviet arms. At respectable patriotic functions the banner of the Communist hammer and sickle hung side by

side with the Union Jack. The majority of middle-class English men and women forgot overnight their previous and very recent antipathies. The mood of the majority swung perceptibly Leftwards as they realised how greatly they had been misled as to the vitality and efficiency of the Soviet civilization. The extremist opponents of Bolshevism, though far from converted, found it increasingly desirable to conceal their antipathies as the heroism and virility of the Russian peoples became more apparent. Nevertheless, a deep-seated hostility to the Soviet Union was reflected in the attitude of some of those provisional Governments, the fate of whose countries depended on the success of Soviet arms. In particular, the Polish National Committee claimed, in December 1942, that it held to the basis of the Riga Treaty as regards the question of Polish eastern frontiers.

### *The first phase of the German Eastern offensive*

When the German armies moved east they were able to include in their ranks not only their own 160 divisions, but some 30 divisions made up of Finnish, Hungarian and Rumanian troops. The ancient anti-Russian sentiment of the Finns, aggravated by their recent struggle against the Soviet Union, was sufficiently deep-seated to throw them into the arms of Hitler, and the British Government thus found itself eventually compelled to regard as enemies a people for whom a few months previously it had been willing to offer armed assistance. Marshal Mannerheim, who had lately figured in British eyes as the valiant leader of a people struggling to maintain their freedom, was now revealed in his true colours as a pro-Nazi. The Nazis attempted to raise local armies from the other Baltic States as they advanced, but, except in the case of Lithuania, where a small force of Fascist sympathisers was speedily mobilised, they were unsuccessful.

The precautions which the Soviet Union had taken by forcibly occupying Polish and Baltic territory provided a very brief interval for preparation before the actual Soviet frontier was reached. The Germans had all the advantage of a surprise-attack and their means of transport was vastly superior. In three days Vilna had been taken, exposing

the road to Dvinsk in the north and Baranowicze in the south. Kovno and the fortress of Brest-Litovsk were also captured. By June 30 the Germans had occupied Minsk and on July 16 had entered Smolensk, although here they were subsequently and temporarily driven out. The German drive was directed towards three main objectives: Leningrad, by an advance along the Baltic coast, with a simultaneous attack from the north-east by the Finns: Moscow along the Smolensk road: and the rich territory of the Ukraine. Of these the Ukraine offensive appeared at first to be the most immediately perilous. Here the Soviet forces, under the command of Marshal Budyenny, by the middle of August were eventually faced by serious difficulties. The Black Sea port of Nikolaiev was abandoned on August 16, the naval dockyards and ships—including a battleship under construction—having first been destroyed. Odessa, which maintained a gallant siege, was eventually entered by the Rumanians and Germans on October 16.

The onrush of the first enemy-thrust on the immense front of 1,800 miles had died down by July 10. The Soviet armies were now established, except in the extreme south, on a fairly stable line. The extraordinary confusion of the earlier days, when German mechanised units were at many points far beyond the Soviet defending forces and it was therefore impossible to estimate which force was enveloping which, had by now been reduced to more normal war-conditions. The German advance had not yet reached Narva in the north: it had halted just within the line of old Russian frontier north of the Pripet Marshes. South of the Marshes the penetration was less severe. The enemy had as yet only advanced some thirty miles into the Ukraine. The enemy-line covered Pskov, Vitebsk and bulged to the outskirts of Smolensk. A further salient threatened Kiev.

The second phase of the struggle was marked by the extraordinary exaggeration of the Nazi official claims. On July 17 the German communique announced that the Russians were "throwing in their last reserves." On the 22nd Berlin declared that there was no longer any unified control of the Soviet forces. On August 6 the Nazis claimed three million Red soldiers killed and another million captured. It is evident that the German Command

reckoned that inasmuch as the ' Stalin Line ' at many points was pierced, the way to Leningrad, Moscow and the Ukraine was now open. Actually, this second phase, which may be taken as having ended by mid-August 1941, had developed into a number of localised battles which could not be regarded as fitting into the design of any single campaign. Largely this was due to the fact that, while the Germans by their rapid mechanised movements could pierce into advanced positions, there would remain large Soviet contingents behind them which refused to regard themselves as defeated. The Soviet technique involved a highly organised guerilla warfare, capable of inflicting deadly blows on the German communications. Many of these apparently surrounded units would either filter back to the main forces, or else, with the help of civilian organization, keep up a vigorous defensive and offensive strategy. The situation thus tended to be immensely confused. By August 4, for example, Nazi troops were well to the east of Smolensk : yet on that very day the Soviet authorities were able to announce that a theatrical party from Moscow had entered the city and were providing entertainment to the troops stationed there.

Budyenny's troops all these weeks had been steadily withdrawing, leaving behind them a ' scorched earth ' which covered what had once been the fertile plains of the Ukraine. This deliberate policy of destruction, carried out in order that the Germans should gain no material advantage by their invasion, became one of the outstanding features of the new war and revealed the unlimited sacrifice which Russians were prepared to make. The complete wreckage of the Dnieper Dam, a gigantic structure which had taken years to construct, was one of the most eloquent examples of this willingness to make any material sacrifice, however great. The withdrawal from the Ukraine was a heavy loss to the Soviet Union not only from the agricultural but from the industrial standpoint. But the success, of the Germans depended essentially not on the acquisition of territory but on the destruction of the Russian forces. By mid-August Marshal Budyenny was in grave danger of being surrounded and of becoming cut off from Timoshenko's central army. Heavy rains, however, helped to slow down the German advance and enabled the Soviet

forces to withdraw across the Dneiper. Three-quarters of Budyenny's army was saved.

Meanwhile, the enemy thrusts both in the north towards Leningrad and on the Smolensk front, with Moscow as the prize, became increasingly menacing. By the end of August Marshal Voroshilov had been compelled to abandon the greater part of the Karelian Isthmus and to fall back on the shorter 'Stalin' line. There was some hope that the Finns, having recovered the territory lost to them in the recent war, would have refused to continue the struggle, but these hopes proved to be illusory. Although the German general, von Leeb, found himself hampered by heavy rains and consequently marshy ground, the advance against Leningrad persisted. Baltiski, the Soviet naval base in Estonia, was evacuated by the Russians in the last week of August, and by September 1 the Germans had reached the outer defences of Leningrad. Not only were the western approaches in the hands of the enemy, but a point of the southern shore of Lake Lagoda, on the north-east of the city, was reached. Leningrad was thus almost surrounded. Supplies from the south were cut off, and the only reliable line of communication became the frozen surface of the lake. It seemed certain that it could be only a matter of time for the city to fall. But the Germans, having gained so much, proved incapable either of rushing the formidable defences or of cutting off communications so entirely as to starve the city into surrender. All through the bitter winter and the long months of spring and summer, into yet another year, the besieged fortress held out. The inhabitants, women and children, as well as the combatant forces, endured a spartan existence with magnificent heroism. It would be almost invidious to relate individual exploits, since such stories are not exceptional but symptomatic of the determination of every citizen to devote his whole energy to resisting the enemy. Nor were these adventures peculiar to Leningrad: in front of and behind the German advance this was in the literal sense a people's war. Thus, in the northern metropolis, women daily carried ammunition and other supplies up into the fighting-line, and even took their place as combatants in the trenches. The Germans, with the prize of Leningrad seemingly in their grasp, were halted effectually, and it was they, rather than the defenders,

who suffered most from the grim horrors of the Russian winter of 1941.

This sensational failure to pierce the defences of Leningrad was itself a significant testimony not only to the heroism of the Red Army but to the efficient staying-power and formidability of the Soviet resistance. For the first time the Nazis were confronted by a foe who refused to become disorganised or defeatist when threatened by disaster. This fact was yet another reminder of the realities which were causing so complete a reversal of the British estimate as to the virility of the Soviet regime. The legend of Nazi invincibility was shattered, and it was the Power which had once been regarded as too little civilised to be capable of effective military resistance which was refuting the legend. If the German failure to capture Leningrad was surprising to the prophets, the Nazi calculations were even more disturbed in the case of the thrust towards Moscow. Here the Germans were now concentrating the major part of their massive strength. By October 7 it was known that the Soviet forces had been compelled to evacuate Orel, an important railway centre between Moscow and Kharkov. In an order published on October 9 Hitler described this offensive as "the last vast stroke before the winter sets in." By October 14 the Soviet official reports were speaking of fierce fighting near Kalinin, a hundred miles north-west of the capital. The western prong of the German thrust had reached Mozhaisk, only sixty-five miles away from the city. On the 25th Kharkov was captured and Rostov was threatened. From the south a further German force was advancing on Tula. A state of siege was declared in Moscow on the 19th, and *The Red Star*, the organ of the Red Army, admitted that the capital was now in danger. The Soviet Government moved to Kuibyshev, 550 miles south-east of Moscow, by the 20th, but Stalin remained in Moscow. Four attacks were now in progress, the Germans reaching Volokolamsk, 75 miles to the north-west of Moscow, on the 28th. At their nearest point the Nazi troops were within 50 miles of the capital.

It was now a struggle against time. Already the weather had turned perceptibly colder and the first snows had set in. Moscow was subjected to a series of night bombing-raids, though on no comparable scale to the blitz on London :

the city, owing to its smaller size and greater concentration, was capable of being defended formidably by anti-aircraft barrage. Though the Russians had suffered heavy losses, Timoshenko had successfully eluded the enemy pincers and no part of his army had been cut off, as at one stage the Nazis had announced. Meanwhile, General Zhukov had taken over command of the central Soviet forces, while Marshal Timoshenko was superintending the armies in the south. As November lengthened it was evident that the German attack on Moscow was slowing down. They had lost the race with the winter. The heavy snows were at last serious enough to rule out all chance of further progress.

The German offensive, having been finally halted in the Moscow centre, was now directed with increasing activity in the Crimea. Sevastopol held out until the summer of 1942, but rapid progress was made elsewhere in the perimeter, Feodosia being captured on November 5.

#### *British-American assistance to Russia*

Now that the Soviet Union had begun to bear the full force of the Nazi impact, it was obvious that the primary obligation both of Britain and America was to give her the utmost support. It was not man-power which was required, but planes, tanks, guns and shells. The Soviet Government had been invited at an early stage in the struggle to draw up a list of the quantity of supplies urgently needed, and, after a slight delay, a British-American mission, headed by Lord Beaverbrook and Mr Harriman, arrived in Moscow on September 28, 1941. This three-power-Conference lasted till October 1. It was an unqualified success. Stalin, whose previous experience of the British had probably persuaded him that they were hesitant, suspicious, prevaricating and unreliable, now found himself confronted with an uncontrollably energetic personality in charge of a committee which had worked out every detail of its plans, and which could give straight answers to every inquiry. Lord Beaverbrook, on his side, seems to have been immensely sensitive to Russian cordiality and the obvious determination of the Soviet Government to throw their full strength into the struggle.

The programme of delivery of supplies which both the American and British Governments set themselves now became a primary obligation: it was the only immediate service to Soviet resistance which they could render. The difficulty was that of conveying the supplies. The British fleet in the Mediterranean was so seriously weakened that the direct route to the Middle East was virtually closed and was only used at great hazard in order to maintain Malta. British supplies to Russia had either to take the long route round the Cape of Good Hope, or else under heavy escort to run the gauntlet of the nest of German submarines along the northern coast of Norway. American supplies mainly used the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. These enormous distances, with the way open to enemy attack, became an increasing embarrassment to the Allies in their effort to provide the equipment which they had promised. Moreover, the American sources of supply were subjected to grave delays. In Britain the first enthusiasm for the Soviet alliance was responsible for an enormous increase of output: but various influences contributed to periods of slackening, while in the United States the production by 1942 was well behind its proper schedule. Clearly, it was not sufficient for America and Britain to provide the arms with which the Soviet forces were to fight. A more direct and active assistance was required, and even by 1941 the demand for a second-front was made not only at public, open-air demonstrations but in more responsible quarters and even by the Soviet authorities themselves.

Russian military strategy has been largely based on the principle that the proper moment for counter-attack is reached only when the enemy has exhausted his efforts. So far, the Soviet forces, although holding up the German advance in many sectors and resisting every attempt on the part of the Nazis to cut through and surround the Red troops, had been in general retreat. Leningrad was already in the front line, Moscow was menaced, Kharkov had fallen, and a considerable part of the Ukraine and Crimea was now in enemy possession. But by the end of November 1941, the Soviet counter-offensive was under way. The time was well chosen. The Soviet forces were far more inured than the enemy to the severities of the Russian climate. The Germans, having failed to secure winter-quarters in



Leningrad or Moscow, were exposed to the full blast of the icy east winds, and were insufficiently provided with warm clothing. A speech, subsequently made by Hitler, revealed the critical degree to which Nazi morale had sunk by the time winter had set in, and there is little doubt that, had it been possible at this moment to launch a British-American attack in the west, the Nazi war-machine might have cracked beyond repair. Marshal Timoshenko commenced his operations by an attack on Rostov, which was recaptured on November 29. By the first week of December 1941, the Germans in the southern Ukraine were in full retreat from Taganrog. The Moscow wedge was the next scene of operations. Kalinin was recaptured on December 15, and, in the north, an attack was opened on the Finns at the southern end of Lake Onega. In the Crimea the Red Army drove the Germans out of Kerch, across the narrow straits opposite the Caucasus, on December 30. By January 9, 1942, the threat to Moscow was so far relieved that the Soviet forces having entered Kaluga were now back in the Smolensk province.

The Soviet attack was sustained throughout this first winter. By January 28 Moscow was able to announce that the Red Army were within ninety miles of Smolensk. Two days later the Upper Donetz was crossed and Lozovo taken. A Soviet radio-statement on March 7, 1942, declared that during February at least 40,000 Germans had been killed and 263 towns and villages liberated from the Nazi yoke. But, in spite of these successes and of the low morale of the enemy troops, the Soviet counter-offensive failed to produce decisive results. The Germans yielded ground, but nowhere did their retreat become a rout. They were able to repulse all attempts to capture the important railway-junction of Orel. These comparative failures were an unpleasant reminder of the defensive strength of the Nazi war-machine, even under circumstances so favourable to the Russians. The full weight of the Soviet attack was not sufficient to dislodge the enemy from a position which would enable him vigorously to renew the struggle when the winter had passed.

*Nazi atrocities*

Atrocity-stories are a familiar feature of war-propaganda, and for this reason are rightly regarded with suspicion unless the accounts can be rigidly verified. In this instance, however, there could be no doubt as to the savagery perpetrated by the Nazis on Russian prisoners and civilians. Photographs taken in the villages which the Red Army re-entered could neither lie nor exaggerate. The Germans found themselves as they advanced confronted by a people who were ready to sacrifice everything in defence of their country. Moreover, civilian resistance was planned and anything but spasmodic. The Nazi invaders were constantly attacked from the rear, their transport damaged and their lives in constant danger. They retaliated in the only manner known to them, by terrorist and incredibly brutal methods. Not only were Russian villages burnt to the ground, homes looted and old men and women as well as children left to starve and freeze, but torture and massacre were inflicted with a bestial disregard for any principle of human decency. As the Nazi 'New Order' spread across the continent it carried with it a scourge of misery and cruelty which could be equalled only by the records of distant and uncivilised centuries.

A summary of these atrocities was issued by Commissar Molotov in April 1942, and its indictment of German methods might have seemed incredible, had not its charges been confirmed by similar action in Poland and Czechoslovakia. An order was issued to the Nazi troops in the summer of 1942 when they were entering the Caucasus, instructing German soldiers not to violate and slaughter the women of the locality, as it was not desired to arouse the enmity of the fierce Caucasian tribes. The fact that it was found necessary to issue such an order is significant.

Individual examples of Nazi horrors convey little impression of the widespread nature of these brutal practices. What is perhaps the most appalling feature of such records is supplied by the diaries captured from German officers in which the sadistic depravity of their authors is shockingly revealed. Thus, an officer of the Gestapo, attached to a group of the German tank corps, writes of the period

between February 22 and May 5, 1942, as follows: "The lower race can only be educated by thrashing. . . . Ordered thrashing of fifty-seven year old Russian for disrespectful conduct. . . . To-day myself thrashed a woman who stole some things from my interpreter. . . . Yesterday there were six shootings, to-day thirty-three. They were buried in a common grave." This officer—his name is Friedrich Schmidt—goes on to mention that a girl of fourteen was put to death, also a seventeen year old girl, and a man and his wife who had tried to escape from the occupied area. And, interspersed with his carnal references to slaughter, are his appreciations of the food he is able to obtain. "Each morning I drink hot milk and eat an omelette."<sup>1</sup>

The damning mark of Nazism is that it stimulates and brings to the surface precisely these degenerate types, the men who obviously obtain sexual excitement from the infliction of pain on others. A girl, only twelve years old, was tortured by German soldiers in a village of the Don Steppes. In order to compel her to tell where her father was hiding they forced a ring of hot metal round her face and head. Still she refused to tell. "Another Nazi heated an iron rod in the store until it was red hot and burned Nadya's inky schoolgirl fingers with it. Screaming she slipped from their grasp and ran away into the street. One of them fired and she fell with a shot in her foot."<sup>1</sup>

Severe punishment of the civilian population if they molest the invading arm has been a regular feature of the discipline of war. But civilised armies have usually been careful not to inflict penalties on the general population indiscriminately, and only to pass the extreme sentence on those actually convicted of offences. The Germans, however, deliberately shot men and women as hostages when they could not discover the actual offender. Heydrich, chief of the Gestapo, an official noted for acts of ferocious cruelty, was attacked in Prague on May 27, 1942, and died a week later: in revenge, victims were shot wholesale. The male population of several villages in Czechoslovakia was exterminated. In Poland the Nazi policy was to crush out native culture and to reduce the inhabitants to a state of semi-starvation. In Norway, Holland, Belgium and France, thousands of workers were compulsorily deported

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Paul Winterton in *News Chronicle*, October 20, 1942.

to Germany. By the summer of 1942 spasmodic revolts of the oppressed populations were becoming more frequent, but inasmuch as the civilians were unarmed, these protests could not hope to be effective in overthrowing the Nazi yoke. In Norway, both school-teachers and clergy courageously protested against the Nazi attempt to transfer boys between the ages of ten and eighteen to Quisling training centres. There were mass-resignations, and many teachers and ministers were removed to concentration-camps.

It would be difficult in a historical outline to give any adequate description of the bestial horrors inflicted on the civilians under Nazi control, horrors not perpetrated in the heat of the moment by drunken or war-intoxicated troops, but by the cold-blooded and deliberate organization of the Nazi Command. In Czechoslovakia the entire male population of villages were massacred, as has already been stated, in retaliation for the assassination of Heydrich. It was among the Polish Jews, however, that this butchery attained its largest and, indeed, almost incredible proportions. According to the official Note addressed by the Polish Government on December 10, 1942, to the Governments of the Allies, over one million Jews in Poland had perished in three years, the number of those actually slaughtered reaching many hundreds of thousands. Several millions of Polish subjects were deported to Germany for slave-labour or evicted from their homes. By the end of 1940 there were 400,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto: in September, 1942, ration-cards were issued for only 120,000, and in October for only 40,000. The actual process of deportation was carried out with calculated brutality. The German police would cordon off a block of houses selected for clearing out the Jewish inhabitants and then fire their rifles at random as the signal for all to assemble in the yard. The infirm were carried off to the cemetery to be shot and buried. Death was considered by many of these helpless victims to be preferable to the torture of slavery. Suicides were frequent, and men and women in some cases are said to have consented to pay a fee for the privilege of being shot rather than to endure the horrors awaiting them. Those taken for deportation were locked in sealed cattle-trucks, trucks which had room for 40 persons but into

which 120 were packed. The floors of the trucks were covered with quicklime and chlorine. These death-traps usually travelled to what became known in Poland as 'extermination camps' at Tremblinka, Belzoc and Sobibor.

It matters comparatively little whether those who are sceptical of atrocity-stories, even when collected in official reports, are prepared to regard these figures as exaggerated. Should the most generous pruning of these statistics be accepted, the balance from all quarters, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia—and as far north as Norway, where Hitler discovered a Jewish problem—points to a record of savagery unparalleled in modern history. The Nazi leaders and the men who perpetrated these horrors are guilty of a crime more fearful than human imagination can picture. These murderers had sunk lower than the most primitive tribes. They had become under the Nazi ideology monsters beside which the behaviour of the most ferocious of animals appears merciful and intelligent.

On October 26, 1941, Mr Churchill announced that the punishment of Nazi war-criminals was now a "major purpose of the war," and the British and American Governments together with the Governments of other Allies later set up a United Nations Commission to compile evidence of war-crimes with a list of the officials responsible. Although, in some quarters, this declaration was criticised as savouring of the cry of "hang the Kaiser," which had been predominant in 1918, it was made clear that there was no intention of resorting to mass-reprisals, and that only those actually responsible would be brought to justice. The absence of such measures would merely promote the outbreak of undisciplined lynching and massacre in the occupied territories when the opportunity arose.

### *The Atlantic Charter*

Hitherto there had been a conspicuous omission on the part of the Allies to provide any positive declaration of peace-aims. On August 14, 1941, Mr Attlee broadcast the news that Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt had met in Newfoundland waters and had drawn up an eight-point declaration which subsequently became known as the

Atlantic Charter. The Charter was couched in general terms and commenced with the statement that no aggrandisement, territorial or other, was sought by the American or British Governments: that no territorial changes which did not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned were desired: that all peoples should have the right to choose their own form of government, and that sovereign rights and self-government should be restored to those who had been forcibly deprived of them: that all States, whether victors or vanquished, should have access on equal terms to the trade and raw materials of the world, such as were needed for their economic prosperity: that there should be the fullest co-operation between all nations for the purpose of securing improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security: that the establishment of peace must afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries and freedom for all men from fear and want: that men must be enabled to cross the seas without hindrance: and that ultimately the nations must abandon the use of force, but that, pending the establishment of general security, the disarmament of nations which threatened or might threaten aggression was necessary.

At a conference of the Allied Governments held at St James's Palace, London, on September 24, 1941, unanimous agreement with the Charter was signified. On December 4 a declaration of friendship and mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and the Polish Republic was signed in Moscow. A Polish army, composed mainly of those who had been interned on Soviet territory when Poland was invaded in 1939, was already mobilised and fighting side by side with the Soviet troops. Later, on June 11, 1942, Mr Eden was able to announce in the House of Commons that a twenty-year treaty between Great Britain and the Soviet Union had been signed by Mr Molotov on May 26, 1942. This treaty provided not only for co-operation during the war but for collaboration in the peace-settlement and the period of reconstruction. On the same day it was stated that "full understanding" had been reached between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Thus, a pattern of agreement in principle was beginning .

to emerge among the Governments which were co-operating to overthrow the Fascist menace, and, in particular, some removal of the suspicion which had been characteristic of the relations between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Saxon Powers. Both in America and Britain there remained elements, especially among the Roman Catholics, which were fundamentally hostile to the Soviet cause: but these elements were comparatively subdued in view of the official attitude of the Governments concerned and of the obvious trend of popular opinion. The spread of the war to Russia had been the outstanding feature of the summer of 1941. But the war was now to be extended to still wider proportions.

## CHAPTER 7

### JAPAN AND AMERICA ENTER THE STRUGGLE

#### *Pearl Harbour and other disasters*

THE resignation of the Japanese Cabinet on October 16, 1941, gave an indication that the uneasy situation in the Far East was approaching its climax. Nothing was more unlikely than that Japan, as an Axis Power, would remain permanently neutral. Since the fall of France and the cession of French Indo-China to Japan, British strength in the Pacific had been strained to its utmost capacity, and it was certain that Japan would make use of this opportunity to realise her dreams of Asiatic empire, whenever she deemed that the moment for striking had come. The closing of the Burma Road and the consequent stoppage of supplies to China had been excused by the Government, as we have seen, on the ground that Britain was anxious not to precipitate a conflict. But the Burma Road had been reopened on October 17, 1940, and since then Japanese-British relations had become those of a hardly veiled hostility.

Japan found that it was not in her interests to strike when the war broke out in Europe. She needed proof that the Nazi machine would indeed be powerful enough to overcome British-French resistance in Europe. Moreover, she was still too deeply involved in her comparatively unsuccessful Chinese adventure to contemplate at that moment a new campaign. When Germany entered into a pact with the Soviet Union, Japanese politicians were undoubtedly dismayed: they were not, however, prepared to engage the Allies so long as there was any possibility of Soviet bombers flying from Vladivostok over Tokyo. Japan therefore accepted Hitler's advice and entered into a non-aggression pact with Moscow. The collapse of France and the inability of Vichy to adopt any other course than surrender meekly to Japanese claims to Indo-China immensely improved the Japanese position. Certainly not later than October 1941, she had completed her war-plans.



She was strongly and repeatedly urged by Hitler to delay no longer but to cause a diversion by her attack on British possessions : but, though these ' orders ' may have weighed with her, she was determined to choose for herself the most favourable moment for a realization of her ambitions.

A further indication of the trend of events was a statement by Mr Churchill at the Mansion House on November 10, 1941, that " should the United States become involved in war with Japan the British declaration will follow within the hour." Negotiations between the United States and Japan were still in progress, as a result of President Roosevelt's inquiry as to the reasons for the Japanese military activities in Indo-China. On December 7, while the Japanese Ambassador in Washington was still in consultation with the American Secretary of State, Japan bombed Pearl Harbour, the American naval base in the Hawaiian Islands. Simultaneously, Japanese air-attacks were launched on Shanghai, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. It is open to argument whether the Japanese did not blunder seriously by so precipitating the United States into the war. It is true that she gained heavily by thus crippling the American fleet in Pearl Harbour at the outset. But had she contented herself with engaging the British it is probable that isolationist sentiment in the United States, strengthened by American disinclination to enter the war in alliance with the Soviet Union, would have slowed down American assistance in the Pacific to a considerable extent. On the short-term view Pearl Harbour was a gain, but from the long-term aspect it increased the odds against Japan. Instantly, the isolationist elements in the United States were swept aside. America entered the war, not for idealistic motives, as in 1917, but as the result of a treacherous attack upon herself. Japan had deliberately extended the war into the eastern hemisphere, and Britain, no longer alone, found herself in line with America, the Soviet Union, China and Holland.

Japanese preparations in the Marshall Islands, 2,000 miles from Pearl Harbour, must have been proceeding rapidly while the negotiations with America were still under way. Japanese aircraft carriers approached the Hawaiian Islands on Saturday night, December 6, with small submarines, the bombers and torpedo-carrying planes

attacking at dawn on the Sunday in three waves. They found the American forces entirely unprepared. Most of the naval personnel and the officials were in bed and asleep. Forty per cent. of the crews were away at Honolulu on week-end leave. The aircraft were not dispersed but lay conveniently close together, or else were packed away in their hangars. The only plane in flight was that of an American civilian, who on his early joy-ride encountered the first Japanese squadron and, thinking they were friends, waved to them: the reply was a hail of machine-gun fire from which he fortunately escaped unscathed. There were some temporary aircraft-warning installations in operation, but the permanent system had not been completed. Warning of approaching planes was given shortly after 7 a.m., but the army officer to whom this was reported assumed they were friendly planes and took no action.

Under these conditions it is only surprising that the damage inflicted was not more complete. But the damage was serious enough. The battleship *Arizona* was blown up and sunk, together with seven other battleships sunk or disabled: a wireless-control target ship, three destroyers and a minelayer were also sunk. Other vessels were damaged, the *Oklahoma*, a vessel of 29,000 tons, being capsized. 2,117 officers and men were killed, 960 missing and 376 wounded. 30 naval and 97 army planes were destroyed. More than half America's battleships at a single stroke were put out of action. The army casualties were 168 killed and 223 wounded. The civilian death-roll was also heavy. There is full evidence that all who were engaged in the defence of Pearl Harbour behaved with the utmost gallantry and efficiency.

How can this extraordinary unpreparedness be explained? It is obviously idle to complain that this was a surprise and treacherous attack. Modern warfare knows no law. Moreover, for many long months war had been anticipated and there had been ample time for preparation. The Japanese had pursued precisely the same tactics against the Russians nearly forty years previously: they had sunk the Port Arthur fleet the night before the ultimatum expired. But if the Americans had under-estimated the high efficiency of the Japanese war-organization, the British authorities were found to be equally unready. The opening stages of the

Far Eastern war illustrated not only the sudden striking-power and carefully ordered manœuvres of the enemy, but they also exposed an apparently supine fatalism and complacency on the part of those who should have been spending the last five years in preparing British Asiatic possessions for just such an attack as they were now called upon to resist. When full measure has been allowed for the fact that British imperial military strength in the Far East was sorely limited, and that the naval reinforcements which could otherwise have been sent were heavily engaged in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, there remains a deadly balance of short-sightedness and inefficiency which were responsible for a series of disasters.

The news of the first of these disasters reached England on December 10. The *Prince of Wales*, one of the newest British battleships, and the *Repulse*, an older battle-cruiser, were sunk by Japanese bombers off the Malayan coast. These ships had been sent to intercept Japanese landings without aerial escort.

Admiral Phillips, who went down with his ship, was aware that no aircraft carrier was available and therefore applied to Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, the Commander-in-Chief at Singapore, for air support from land. This support was not immediately available owing to weather and to military operations. The Admiral put to sea, however, probably as the result of advice from London that a Japanese landing was about to take place at Singora and must be prevented. Another message, which was subsequently known to have been sent out by the enemy, stating that a landing had taken place much farther south and was therefore threatening Singapore more immediately, caused him to alter his course, which meant that he was actually falling into a trap. After a preliminary attack by high-level bombers the two ships were attacked by eighty planes which had flown 400 miles from their base for the express purpose of engaging these ships. A barrage was put up which took heavy toll of the enemy planes, but both vessels sunk with the loss of many lives. The British were left unmolested to pick up survivors. That the risk of sailing without aerial escort should never have been undertaken was all too obvious, and the most that can be said in defence of these tactics is that the Admiral believed that

British fighters were on their way to protect him. These fighters arrived, however, only after the enemy had flown away. The consequence of this disaster was to place the Japanese navy in undisputed control of the South China Sea.

This episode had a peculiarly depressing effect on the general public in England inasmuch as, only two months later—on February 12, 1942—the German battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, as well as the cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, were able to escape from Brest by daylight through the Dover Straits to Heligoland. A large number of raids had been carried out on Brest, and the *Scharnhorst* was repeatedly reported to have been hit. Yet, although the flight of these ships was expected, they were able to run the gauntlet and, however seriously damaged, make for port. A contrast was inevitably drawn between the accuracy of Japanese as compared to British bombing.

The Japanese attack on the Philippine Islands commenced the day after the disaster of Pearl Harbour. The enemy waited for the news that the raid on Pearl Harbour had been successful and then invaded Luzon Island. The Philippines had passed into American control as a heritage of the Spanish war. As was the case with all these undertakings the Japanese plan had been prepared months earlier. A fleet of transports, armoured invasion barges, artillery and air-force were dispatched from Formosa, China and Japan. More than 200,000 soldiers, with full equipment and stores were landed on the scattered coast during the six weeks of the struggle, and this campaign certainly ranks as the most ambitious and successful sea-expedition as yet attempted. The Japanese machinery was highly efficient, but here, for the first time, the Japanese encountered serious resistance. General MacArthur, although faced with the defence of a vast territory with an impossibly small contingent of troops, exacted heavy penalties on the invader. The American and Filipino troops fought gallantly and on several occasions annihilated the landing parties. Two Japanese battleships were sunk in the attack on Luzon. At least 163 Japanese planes were destroyed by February 1942. The enemy, however, by sheer weight of numbers and a complete disregard for losses, gradually gained ground. General MacArthur had relied on naval assistance from the Hawaiian Islands and Singapore, but the defeats in both these quarters

meant that he was fighting a battle the eventual outcome of which was inevitable. Nevertheless, his forces managed by an epic defence of the Bataan peninsula to give the Allies time for regrouping their naval and air strength after their initial disasters. The Japanese, who had established an elaborate espionage and 'fifth columnist' system among their 20,000 nationals in Mindanao Island, were nevertheless misinformed as to the American defences in Manila Bay. Here their attack was repulsed by the 16-inch shore batteries with immense casualties. It was not until April 9 that the archipelago was finally in the hands of the enemy.

This campaign was characterised by a ruthless disregard for human life and decency only equalled by the Nazis in Europe. Manila had been declared an open town by General MacArthur, in order to safeguard the civilian population: all anti-aircraft defences and military supplies had been scrupulously removed. It was bombed two nights running and machine-gunned, while by day Japanese planes seemed deliberately to mark down from their low altitude the ancient cathedral and other historic buildings. The Japanese, who were quite unable to affect the Filipinos by their propaganda, sent a party of scouts to hold up traffic, and these men deliberately machine-gunned a civilian omnibus, subsequently outraging the girl students who were travelling home from Manila University.

The attack on Hong Kong commenced on December 8, the first air-raid taking place in the early hours of that morning. Although eight million pounds had been spent on the defences in the previous six years, the island was far too exposed and isolated to have been held by the 8,000 British, Canadian and Indian troops stationed there. Lord Strabolgi reckons<sup>1</sup> that at least 60,000 men were required. Though the possibility of an eventual attack by Japan had been obvious for at least a period of four years, few essential preparations had been made. An aerodrome had been constructed at Kowloon—the island itself affords no level landing ground—and there was a small volunteer force, almost exclusively European. But no attempt to arm the numerous Chinese residents had been carried out, while General Chiang Kai-Shek's offer to send ten Chinese divisions to help in the defence was refused. It is true that

<sup>1</sup> *Singapore and After*.

this refusal was due to the fact that equipment would have had to be found for troops, and that no equipment was available: but that fact only emphasises the failure, since 1938 at least, to establish munition factories on the island, in which thousands of Chinese would have proved efficient workers.

The impossibility of holding Hong Kong under these conditions suggests that it might have been wiser to abandon the island. This would have meant deserting the million Chinese residents, but their fate became no easier when the inevitable surrender took place on Christmas Day. The troops could have been better employed in Manila. The loss of Hong Kong seems to illustrate that fatal tendency in British strategy to hold on to so many scattered positions as to dissipate a strength which was dangerously inferior to that of the enemy. At least 6,000 troops were made prisoner when Hong Kong capitulated after a gallant but hopeless struggle, after two demands for surrender by the enemy had been rejected. The seizure by the Japanese of the water-reservoirs was the final blow. The Chinese Government made a strenuous effort to relieve the garrison by an advance on the Japanese forces on the mainland, but for the last week the island was without water or light, and the civilian death-roll under shelling and bombing was nearly 150 a day. The responsibility for the loss does not lie with the defenders.

### *The Fall of Singapore*

The loss of Singapore was an even greater catastrophe than that of Hong Kong. It was captured by the Japanese army advancing through Malaya, whereas the powerful defences of Singapore had been entirely designed to meet a naval attack by sea. But the Japanese did not oblige by conforming to those plans. The chief water-supply was conducted from Johore by a pipe-line on the causeway connecting the island with the mainland: no effort had been made to provide a number of other conduits in view of air-attack. The war-threat, as has already been remarked, had matured by 1938, if not by 1935; but with all these years of waiting the authorities responsible for the defences

had not the imagination even to conceive the necessity of guarding against all major eventualities. Apparently they were satisfied up to the last that all was well. At a first meeting of the Anglo-American War Council, held at Washington on December 23—long after the Pearl Harbour disaster—Mr Churchill declared that the base would be held until the Allies were able to take the offensive. Later, at Ottawa, he informed the press that he had “in unequivocal terms confidence that Singapore could be held against Japanese attacks.”<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Brooke-Popham stated at a press-conference on December 3 that “there are clear indications that Japan does not know which way to turn.” It is possible that the Commander-in-Chief may have wished to inspire morale and mislead the enemy, but it is evident that the Japanese through their wide-spread espionage system knew the truth as to the desperate weakness of this key naval-fortress.

A Japanese landing was attempted at Kota Bahru on December 8, but was beaten off with a loss of more than 4,000 Japanese troops. On December 10 a landing farther north was, however, successful. The aerodrome, out of use owing to monsoon rains, was held by Lieutenant Cross and twelve Indian soldiers until the ground-staff could withdraw. Further enemy troops reached Kedah territory and advanced to a point opposite Penang Island. Penang was evacuated on December 19, after suffering continuous air-attack.

The Battle of Malaya is a story of British, Indian and Australian forces vainly attempting to hold the enemy and succeeding only in delaying his advance. The difficulties imposed on the imperial troops were immense. In this dense jungle-land the climate was tropical: even by night the temperature did not fall below 88°. The swamps swarmed with mosquitoes. The intersecting rivers were alive with crocodiles. With their comparative command of the sea the Japanese were able to land small infiltrating parties trained to jungle fighting and constantly sniping from the trees at the small retreating units. As the enemy advanced he was able to seize local airfields and subject the British to perpetual dive-bombing. Some criticism was directed against the British authorities for having failed

<sup>1</sup> Statement as reported in *The Times*.

sufficiently to destroy property and equipment as the ground was yielded: but those who argued that vested interests were responsible could have had little conception of the conditions against which the Military Command had to grapple. Mines were put out of action, but anything like a scorched earth policy, once the retreat had begun, was all but impossible. These tired, harassed troops, fighting a losing battle and unable to rest day or night, were already performing superhuman feats. By January 31, 1942, they had reached Singapore. Even in those last desperate hours their morale did not falter. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who had fought their way from Siam to south of Johore, joined the Australians in their last stand, and crossed the causeway into the island, headed by the pipers of the Gordons. A demolition of the causeway was carried out, but Mr Gallagher states<sup>1</sup> that it was repaired by the enemy in three hours.

Meanwhile, numerous reinforcements were being poured into Singapore, many of them arriving only in time to be taken prisoners. The end could not now be far distant. The enemy were operating from adjacent Malayan airfields and could unload their bombs, return to their base in a few minutes and reload. Although Sir Robert Brooke-Popham had repeatedly pressed for more air-support only a few Hurricanes were available. The situation was worse even than in Crete. Evacuation of women and children was proceeding as rapidly as possible. The naval oil-tanks were set on fire, but this manœuvre provided the enemy with a dense smoke screen. The defending forces made several desperate counter-attacks, but the failure of water-supply sealed the doom of the garrison. Continual shelling, vast fires which were fast passing beyond control, and the shortage of petrol and ammunition made these last days a veritable hell. On February 15, Singapore surrendered, more than 75,000 men falling into enemy hands.

The loss of Singapore was the greatest disaster to British arms since Dunkirk, and aroused consternation at home, particularly in view of the misleading optimism expressed by Mr Churchill and others as to its capacity to resist the onslaught. Not only were the vast rubber-plantations of Malaya abandoned to the enemy; but the collapse of the

<sup>1</sup> *Retreat in the East.*



chief naval-stronghold in the Far East was a catastrophe of the first magnitude. Little less than thirty million pounds had been spent on its naval and air defences, but the Committee of Imperial Defence had invariably rejected the possibility of land-attack on the ground that the jungle of Malaya was impenetrable. Such want of foresight was criminal. The disaster also revealed the clumsy organization controlling Pacific strategy. The Pacific War Council met for the first time in London on the third day of the attack on the island, when the Battle of Malaya was already lost. The staffs in Washington and London had apparently separately to assent to any proposal made by General Wavell which affected more than one of the Allied nations. There was no effective unified command of the Pacific.

Serious accusations were brought against the habits and behaviour of the British population in Singapore, complaints that they continued to live an existence of comparative ease, that there was heavy drinking, and that the residents indulged in peace-time recreation even when the shadow of final doom overtook them. Such criticism is probably superficial. Life in Singapore was no better and no worse than elsewhere in the Far East, and under stress of peril it is in some respects wiser and more courageous to cling to habits which have become normal than to have recourse to measures which might produce despair and even panic. The catastrophe of Singapore is actually symptomatic of deeper causes. The whole façade of British colonial, civilian and military, tradition was exposed as futile and anachronistic in the ordeal of war against a highly mechanised and modern enemy. The British inhabitants with their innate sense of racial superiority had never conceived it possible or desirable to attempt to enter on an equal footing into relationship with the Asiatic inhabitants. They were essentially foreigners behind a self-imposed barrier, and this regime was shattered instantly and finally when the test came. *The Times* correspondent cabled from Batavia, "the Government had no roots in the life of the people of the country (Malaya). With the exception of certain sections of the Chinese community, some inspired by Free China's struggle for survival, others by Soviet precept or example—the bulk of the Asiatic populations remained spectators from start to finish." More immediately the

failure of this regime to stand up to the ordeal is seen in the refusal to take the one step which would have provided the defenders of Malaya with adequate forces to withstand the invader. Since the outbreak of war there had been the opportunity to raise an efficient army from among the half-million Chinese in Singapore, from the two million Chinese in Malaya, and from the Sikhs, Pathans and other Indians. "The European population," writes Lord Strabolgi,<sup>1</sup> "did their duty. Every man who could serve, and most of the younger ones had already gone off to the wars, performed some service: but, after all, it was our campaign."

"Our campaign," not theirs! The resources of India had never, under Indian supervision, been harnessed to furnish the Peninsula with equipment and munitions. Only in the week preceding the attack on the island was an attempt made to mobilise the Chinese, to teach them the elementary principles of musketry and send them to reinforce the regular troops. Chinese girls and elderly men were allowed in the last few days to serve as A.R.P. wardens and firewatchers, and worked heroically: but the gesture came too late. Hitherto the colonial conception had prevailed that coloured people must be treated as children and servants, and that, as a general rule, only the whites must be allowed to bear arms.

The fall of Singapore marked the fall of an order which had no further place in the contemporary world.

### *Invasion of Burma*

The fall of Singapore placed the Dutch Empire in a critical position. On February 14, 1942, Japanese troops were landed at Palembang in Sumatra, the Dutch having destroyed the oil installations while fighting desperately over each yard of ground. At the port of Balikpapan it is reckoned that in the destruction of the storage tanks and refineries property to the value of eighteen million pounds was blown up. The Japanese had invaded North Borneo on January 17, Tarakan on January 10, and East Borneo on January 23. Other campaigns were launched on Sarawak,

<sup>1</sup> *Singapore and After.*

Celebes, Java, Bali, Amboyna, Timor and New Britain. Although the enemy were in superior strength and working with the advantage of adjacent bases, the Allies inflicted some serious blows. Thus, Dutch and American aircraft and warships in the Macassar Straits sank and damaged forty-two out of a convoy of a hundred vessels between January 23 and 26, including a warship. The American navy also gained a victory on January 31 off the Marshall Islands. These had been seized by the Japanese on the outbreak of their war and were being used as advanced bases and fuelling stations. The American surprise-attack caught the enemy unprepared, and besides inflicting extensive damage on the land resulted in the loss of a Japanese light cruiser, two submarines, a destroyer and eleven other vessels together with thirty-eight aircraft. The Americans lost only five planes and suffered slight damage to warships.

The Battle of Java was lost in the air. It was clear that the Japanese plan was to occupy the islands round Java rather than to make a direct attack on the heavily fortified northern shore. The Allied strategy suggested a doubt in the mind of the High Command as to whether it would be wiser to concentrate forces on Java or to fall back on the Australian mainland. Although American reinforcements were by now beginning to arrive, the number of available fighters to meet the heavy waves of enemy bombers was insufficient. Desperate naval fighting on the part of British and American vessels took place continuously, but by March 6 the enemy had occupied Batavia. On March 8 Java was cut off. Australia herself was threatened with invasion, for, meanwhile—before the end of January—the Japanese had landed in New Guinea—only 400 miles from the continent. On March 17 the American commander, General Douglas MacArthur, arrived in Australia to take charge of the combined Allied forces.

There were at this time, not unnaturally, several bitter complaints in Australian quarters as to the conduct of the Far Eastern struggle. Australian forces had been called upon to fight in far distant theatres of war, and had been sent willingly, in the belief that Australia herself would be afforded adequate protection should the danger turn in her direction. Now it seemed as though the depletion of Australian strength had been incurred without providing the necessary

air and naval defences in the Pacific. But, against this complaint, it must be remembered that the Allied Command was uncertain where the Japanese attack would be next directed, and, as it turned out, Burma was the immediate objective. The official reply to Australian criticism was that the whole war was one struggle in which particular territorial claims must not be given priority against the interests of general strategy. There are grounds for believing that a mistake was made in failing to send a larger number of aircraft to Java, which would at least have delayed plans for the invasion of Australia. The fundamental decision reached, however, by Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt, during the former's visit to America, was that the main effort of the Allies must be to keep up and increase the rate of supplies to the Soviet Union, even at the cost of regarding the Far Eastern onslaught as a secondary theatre of war. In principle this decision was undoubtedly right. If Germany could be finally defeated—and the immediate prospect of her defeat depended on Russia—the overthrow of the Japanese menace would become more possible.

The Japanese attack on Burma commenced on December 15, 1941. This campaign was characterised by a long series of British retreats, with the numerical odds of about 3 to 1 in favour of the enemy. The imperial troops were unaccustomed, as in Malaya, to jungle fighting and were subjected to appalling conditions. On not a few occasions their plight was more desperate than that suffered by British troops in falling back on Dunkirk: the Yorkshire Light Infantry and the Duke of Wellington's Regiment were in action continuously for seven weeks. The Indian forces were subjected to a similar strain. The Japanese advanced like insects rather than civilised beings. They carried with them no ambulance nor the usual impedimenta of an invading army. They fed only on rice. Consequently, they were able to penetrate in all directions, often over apparently impassable ground. But, at first, they were seriously hampered by the amazing exploits of the British and American volunteer airmen, which equalled even the successes gained in the Battle of Britain. Up to April 1942 these pilots had accounted for a loss of at least eighty enemy planes, with infinitesimal losses to themselves. Thus, on January 28 and 29, thirty Japanese planes were destroyed

without a single casualty to the Allies. But by the end of February the enemy had captured important airfields and were once more able to exert air-superiority.

Great assistance in the defence of Burma was also afforded by the Chinese army. General Chiang Kai-Shek's forces had seriously obstructed the northern wing of the Japanese advance. Burma was so unprepared and so short of equipment that the Government applied for permission to draw on some of the supplies awaiting transport to China. General Kai-Shek at once generously signified his consent.

The fall of Rangoon on March 8, 1942, and the eventual loss of the whole of Burma meant not only that India was in dire peril but that the main route of supplies for China was now cut off. Not the least contributory cause to this further disaster was the hostile attitude of the majority of the Burmese population. In the previous autumn the Burmese Prime Minister, U Saw, had visited London and had asked Mr Churchill to promise that his country should be granted dominion status after the war. Mr Churchill refused, mainly on the ground that the pacifically-minded Burmese were incapable of defending themselves.

U Saw made no secret of the fact that in face of this rebuff he would make overtures to the Japanese authorities. It became necessary for the British Government to place him under preventive arrest at Honolulu. Although no such request as he had made would probably have been granted by an imperialist Britain, certainly at that stage it was unfortunate that U Saw was not treated more diplomatically. Burma had not been included in the Indian federation designed by the 1935 Act, but a constitution had been granted, giving her the same measure of self-government which she would have enjoyed had she wished to remain in association with India. The results of treating U Saw's peremptory demands with a marked lack of sympathy were soon evident. Many Burmese were trained and armed by the Japanese to fight against the British. Others of the civilian population took panic at the bombing and fled from Rangoon, so that there was no local labour available at the docks. These were a few of the disadvantages which the hard-pressed defenders were compelled to endure. But the chief reason for the loss of Burma was that the defences were insufficient. The British Government had never

contemplated a lightning struggle of this nature. The defeat of the imperial troops was complete. Burma was overrun by the enemy and the direct route of supplies from India to China was severed.

### *The Indian crisis*

Both Australia and India were now threatened by a Japanese invasion, and the claims of Indian nationalism thus became an acute and immediate political issue.

British policy towards India had passed through many chequered phases. From 1909 onwards the British Government had committed itself to the principle that its ultimate aim was to allow India self-government within the British Commonwealth. Under the Statute of Westminster, 1931, the British Dominions had acquired a status of an almost complete independence: they were placed on an equal footing with Britain and were not committed to her foreign policy. When the second war broke out, for example, they made their own decision whether or not to enter the conflict, and Eire's determination to remain neutral was not disputed. In 1919 the Government of India Act instituted a system of divided responsibility between the Indian representative authorities and British official rule. The system was known as 'dyarchy,' and in the nine provinces of British India legislative councils were set up on a parliamentary model. At the centre of government a double chamber, consisting of a Council of State and a Legislative Assembly, was constituted, more than half the members of these bodies being elected. No direct attempt could be made at present to bring the native Indian States outside British India into one embracing federal unity.

The problem of a self-governing India has always involved two fundamental difficulties. One of these was the existence of the native States, administered under a hereditary, aristocratic rule and therefore alien to any sort of democratic, parliamentary order. The other was the rival and apparently irreconcilable claims of the Hindus and the Mohammedan minority. On the Indian side there lay a deep and increasing suspicion that all British proposals for an advance towards self-government were inspired by

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the determination to retain effective control for as long as possible. There was certainly considerable evidence to confirm this suspicion. When the Government of India replied to the demand of the All-Parties Conference in 1929 for full dominion status by admitting that this was indeed the goal, this reference was relegated not to a specific date but to a remote future. Under the 1919 Act the British power retained control of finance and the maintenance of order.

After three Round Table Conferences in London, one of which Lord Halifax (then Viceroy and Lord Irwin by title) persuaded Gandhi, the foremost Indian leader, to attend, a new Act was passed in 1935. Gandhi, although possessing enormous influence over the Indian masses, was not wholly representative of Indian opinion, since his philosophy was pacifist and his policy of avoiding any type of violent resistance was frequently disregarded in practice by his supporters. The 1935 Act marked a very definite advance on the road towards Indian dominion status, but once again the measure was vitiated in Indian eyes by its failure to name any date when this ultimate demand would be realised. The Provinces of British India, however, became self-governing with certain reservations until 1939, when the Congress ministries resigned and the Seven Provinces under their administration reverted to British rule. Four Provinces retained their parliamentary order.

The Congress ministries resigned as a consequence of a serious diplomatic affront on the part of the British power. The Viceroy, who was directly responsible to Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, declared India to be a belligerent State without even the formality of consultation with the Indian representatives. This procedure may have been constitutionally correct, since India was not a dominion : but it was morally a blunder of the first order. Indians almost universally regarded it as an insult to the Assembly, a studied contrast to the freedom which had been assumed by Eire. It was the more unnecessary as Indian opinion was under no illusions as to the consequences of an Axis victory and the effect of a Japanese invasion. Gandhi himself recognised that his own pacifist attitude was not representative of the majority and that Indian opinion would have followed Nehru in active war-participation.

The effect of British policy was, however, to drive Congress into line with Gandhi's 'non-co-operation,' though not on pacifist grounds. Indian regular troops were used in various theatres of war, but there was no mass-movement in favour of the war-effort. The British Government, having failed through Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, to obtain support, proceeded on its own responsibility to introduce what it considered to be conciliatory measures. On August 8, 1940, Mr Amery and Lord Linlithgow jointly announced that an Advisory Council should be set up, and that as soon as possible after the war a conference should be held for the purpose of drawing up a new constitutional scheme, the framing of which "should be primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves"—provided it did not prevent "the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connexion with India had imposed on her."

This gesture did not succeed in winning the approval either of Congress leaders or the Moslem League. The latter feared that the proposed enlargement of the Executive Council, which was to take place immediately, would commit it to the principle of a central Government in which a Hindu majority would be predominant: Congress, on the contrary, complained that there was still no guarantee of such a Government being at once realised. While assenting to Gandhi's original desire that Indians should "refrain from embarrassing the British Government in its war-effort," it was decided that non-co-operation should be continued and the right was claimed of "preaching conscientious objection to all war or to the participation of India in the present war." The Viceroy refused to admit this liberty, and a deadlock was accordingly reached, several of the Indian leaders being imprisoned for the offence of making public speeches against the war.

With the imminent threat of a Japanese invasion a new situation was created. If India was to be saved, her vast man-power and resources must be mobilised, if only at the eleventh hour: and to secure this some way out of the deadlock must be found. It was at this moment that Sir Stafford Cripps flew to India with a new proposal.

*The Cripps offer*

Stafford Cripps had risen to political favour with an almost meteoric rapidity. His career had been temporarily eclipsed when he was summarily expelled from the Labour Party for his leading share of the Popular Front campaign in the troubled epoch before the second war. On the advent of Mr Churchill to power in 1940 the new Government had taken a daring and courageous step in sending him to represent Britain in the Soviet Union. It is true that this appointment was so hurriedly executed that Cripps arrived in Moscow without the recognised status of ambassador, and that the Soviet authorities at once objected to this procedure. The blunder was rectified, but for a long while Cripps found himself confronted by a barrier of Soviet suspicion against which, in spite of his own Left-wing sympathies, he could make little headway. With the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union, the position was transformed and Cripps was able to carry out much valuable work in cementing the ties between the new allies. When, early in 1942, feeling that his work in Russia was accomplished he returned to England, he found himself acclaimed a national hero, and looked to by progressivists of every shade as the political leader of the future. He was borne in on the wave of that socialist and liberal enthusiasm which the military strength of the Red Army and the stability of the Soviet citizens had released. Even by those who had regarded him as dangerously Left his personal integrity and ability were respected. Sir Stafford was now faced with that type of decision which may be momentous in a political career, but the pros and cons of which are profoundly difficult to weigh at the time in their true perspective. Should he join the Government or should he lead the Opposition which would in all probability rally round him? To some extent the issue was the same as that which had confronted the Labour Party in 1940. Without attempting to adjudge whether the course taken in either of these cases was right or wrong, there is one comment which can be passed upon it: the argument that in a struggle so desperate as the second world-war the differences between Socialist and Conservative-

imperialist convictions become irrelevant is shown by the course of events to be unsound. The nature of this conflict intensified the irreconcilability of the two outlooks. Whoever entered the Churchill Ministry believing that the claims of socialism could be temporarily superseded mistook the significance of the upheaval in which mankind was now involved.

There is some reason for supposing that Sir Stafford Cripps was at first offered an inferior position in the Government. If so, the offer was wisely declined. Sir Stafford joined the Government as Leader of the House of Commons in partnership with Mr Attlee who, as Leader of the Labour Party, was deputy Prime Minister. When it became known that Sir Stafford was to be sent on a mission to India, bringing with him a new proposal for a settlement, hopes both in Britain and India rose high. It was felt that Cripps, in view of his record, would not have volunteered to have become an emissary of any proposals which were other than enlightened and liberal. More cynical critics, however, have inferred that he was deliberately entrusted with a task so difficult that it would fail and thus deprive him of the popular status which he had acquired so fully as to be of some embarrassment to Mr Churchill and his supporters.

Two defects were evident in the Cripps mission from the outset. The first was that it was conducted at far too great a speed. Sir Stafford left England on March 15, 1942, and by April 11 his mission was over. He was evidently under the impression that in a few short weeks the Indian problem could be solved, his programme being arranged on the assumption that he would be only for a few days in conference with the various leaders. This was a fundamental mistake and induced an attitude on the part of Cripps that the British Government proposals must be accepted or rejected with a minimum of negotiation. It was a fatal attitude, since, despite the apparent urgency of the situation, the Indian problem had become so involved that it could only have been resolved by patient deliberation, without any suspicion of haste. The Indian temperament certainly does not lend itself to haste. Moreover, a second defect was that the British offer was presented precisely at a moment when British interests were imperilled by the

threat to India. Accordingly, the Indian terms had risen. To be magnanimous in the moment of peril will always suggest that the offer is made under duress, and the natural reaction of the other party is to drive as hard a bargain as possible.

The draft declaration brought by Sir Stafford Cripps travelled, indeed, much farther in the direction of satisfying the Indian demands than any previous British document. Had it been presented ten or even five years before it would almost certainly have been accepted. It was a pledge to grant dominion status at the conclusion of the war, and it proposed the appointment of an Indian constituent assembly which should itself frame the new constitution. The Moslem demand for Pakistan, as it was called, was acknowledged by providing for the right of individual provinces to contract out of the India which would be governed under the new constitution.

Several objections were at once raised by the Indian representatives. The first and perhaps the least important was that the Cripps draft envisaged that the constituent assembly which would draw up the constitution would be elected by a college composed of the members of the provincial legislatures to be chosen at the end of the war. This, it was pointed out, would mean that nearly half the college would be appointed by the hereditary princes. More serious was the objection that the 'contracting-out' provision would destroy all hope of a united, federated India: Cripps, indeed, admitted on being questioned that any separated provinces would have the right of maintaining their own armies and conducting their own foreign policy. The Indian case was that this disunity would make for a retention of British power, since in practice this would mean that many of the native States would avail themselves of the right to contract out, together with those provinces where the Moslem League was in the majority. Between these rival entities British influence, so the Indians feared, would remain the final arbiter.

More immediate, however, were the criticisms raised over the defence of India. On this Sir Stafford was from the first uncompromising: he agreed that there should be an Indian Defence Minister, but his functions would be so trivial that in Nehru's opinion he would have been merely

'comic.' The Congress leaders did not advocate that the Commander-in-Chief, General Wavell, should be deprived of any of his military strategic responsibilities, but that the normal relation between military and political power should be preserved, and that the political power should be wholly in Indian hands.

None of these issues seem to have been fundamental. The principle at stake was that Congress desired an executive council, composed of representative Indians, with the Viceroy entirely in the position of a constitutional monarch. Cripps' reply was that this would have involved prolonged discussions over constitutional problems and that the existing authority of the Viceroy, acting under Mr Amery and the India Office at Whitehall, should remain undisturbed during the war. He objected to the claim of a 'national government' on the ground that this would have involved the "absolute dictatorship of a (Hindu) majority." The Congress president stated subsequently that this difficulty could have been overcome, but that it was not raised in the discussion and that no opportunity was given for suggestions as to how to overcome it. "We are not interested," he wrote, "in Congress, as such, gaining power, but we are interested in the Indian people as a whole having freedom and power."

Sir Stafford Cripps failed, therefore, to secure agreement, and the deadlock continued. The psychology of the proceedings had been unfavourable from the commencement. Cripps was evidently exasperated by the unpromising nature of the Indian demands. He seems to have assumed that the Indians ought to have been so sensible of British magnanimity in making an offer far in advance of any previous British proposal that they would accept the olive-branch without delay. The Indians, however, regarded their claims as sheer justice: they envisaged the defence of India and the question of Moslem minority rights as matters which must be settled by Indians alone. The British-owned Calcutta paper, the *Statesman*, indeed remarked: "it is a folly so colossal as to be even too sublime, to suggest that a foreign Government running the war on the cumbrous British methods, without the active sympathy of the people, can check the infiltration of the Japs."

The failure of this mission certainly had the effect of embittering Sir Stafford Cripps and almost of persuading him that the Congress leaders were so unreasonable that the traditional Tory view as to their unsuitability for the responsibilities of self-government was vindicated. The deadlock was, however, open to a different interpretation. The lessons of Malaya and Burma had forced the British to recognise that their traditional attitude was no longer tenable, and compelled them to offer what a few years previously they had declared to be unthinkable. Virtually, therefore, Britain was admitting the error of her former attitude and thus revealing a weakness in her position of which the Indians swiftly availed themselves. The Tory elements, on the other hand, made full use of the opportunity which the failure of the Cripps mission provided, to adopt an uncompromisingly reactionary attitude. In any case the deplorable result was that the deadlock remained unsolved, even though the enemy stood on the threshold. In this delicate and strained situation Mr Churchill's speech in the House of Commons on September 10, 1942, was hardly calculated to improve Anglo-Indian relations. "Congress," he said, "does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organization built around a party-machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests. . . . It may well be that these activities by the Congress Party have been aided by Japanese Fifth Column work on a widely extended scale. . . . The outstanding fact which has so far emerged from the violent acts of the Congress Party has been their non-representative character and their powerlessness to throw into confusion the normal peaceful life of India. . . . Large reinforcements have reached India. . . . The number of white soldiers now in that country, though very small compared to size and population, are larger than at any time in the British connexion. I therefore feel entitled to report that the situation in India at this moment gives no occasion for undue despondency or alarm."

This crude militancy, the suggestion that Congress was a pro-enemy organization, and that the position was generally satisfactory because the European troops had been reinforced, was regarded in many Conservative as well as Labour

quarters as almost the most unfortunate utterance which could have been made at that juncture. Subsequently, at the Mansion House in November, Mr Churchill declared that Britain was determined to hold on to her empire after the war. The Government, moreover, appeared to be satisfied that there was no need to pursue any other policy regarding India than to keep the Congress leaders in prison and to suppress the various riots and disturbances which broke out in a few places. Mr Rajagopalachari, an Indian statesman who was realist enough to appreciate that a way must be found of overcoming these deplorable conditions, held several conversations with Mr Jinnah, the head of the Moslem League, and believed that he could find a constructive solution. He applied for permission to visit Mr Gandhi in prison as a further step towards agreement, but was refused this right by the Viceroy. Mr Amery was equally discouraging. Mr Rajagopalachari's request that he should be allowed to fly to London in the interest of these negotiations was cold-shouldered. Had the Japanese been able to press forward their campaign and cross the Indian frontier a catastrophe, greater than any which had yet threatened the British Empire, might have been precipitated.



## CHAPTER 8

### THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES REOPEN

#### *The Fall of Tobruk*

THE British advance in Libya had been halted by strong enemy reinforcements. At least four German divisions had been sent to the support of the shattered Italian army, and General Rommel was now in command. After a lull of some months fighting broke out round Sidi Rezegh on December 1, 1941, and the oasis of Jalo became the scene of desperate fighting. Cairo headquarters, which had been responsible on more than one occasion for prematurely optimistic reports, announced on December 18 a big British victory with an advance from Gazala of thirty miles. But meanwhile Rommel was receiving a stream of supplies, including tanks. By the end of May the desert-battle had once more reopened with full fury. Rommel was known to have brought 250 tanks into action.

In some respects this African warfare resembled a naval rather than a land engagement. Large minefields were sown to impede the advance of tanks and infantry. Rommel's first attempt was to break the British lines by a frontal attack. Having failed to accomplish this, narrow lanes which could be used either for bringing up supplies or for retreat were made by the enemy in the minefields. A heavy attack was delivered round a track junction, some twelve miles south of Acroma, known as Knightsbridge. Here also the enemy were driven back. On June 2 Mr Churchill announced that he had received a report from General Auchinleck that Rommel's plans for his initial defensive had completely failed. A German landing from the sea between Tobruk and Gazala had been repulsed by British naval forces acting in co-operation with the army.

By the early days of June Rommel's objective became evident. He was aiming to break through the right flank of the British VIIIth Army and cut its coast-line communications. By June 16 it was clear that to some extent this attempt had been successful, but it was not for some

days known how great a disaster had befallen British arms. On June 13 British tanks fell into an ambush and lost no less than 230 out of a total of 300.

At one stroke the British by this colossal misadventure were largely at Rommel's mercy. By June 18 they had evacuated both El Adem and Sidi Rezegh. But worse was to follow. It had been assumed that Tobruk, as before, was impregnable. Cairo reported on June 19 that "we are now in much the same position that we were before the advance of last November, with the exception that we now hold Halfaya Pass and other fortified positions on the frontier which were then strongly occupied by the enemy." On June 21 the blow fell: Tobruk was taken. British and South Africans fought desperately in the streets even after dark had fallen. Twenty-five thousand prisoners fell into enemy hands.

The British now withdrew to Mersa Matruh, abandoning it the following day (June 29). The enemy forces in three columns crossed the Egyptian frontier and by June 30 had reached El Daba, eighty miles from Alexandria. The position now appeared to be desperate and it seemed probable that Egypt and the Suez Canal might be lost. The situation was saved mainly by the incessant bombing of the R.A.F. The German air-arm was clearly inferior. General Auchinleck was able to inflict a local defeat on the enemy at El Alamein, and some 600 Germans and 430 Italians were captured. The line now reached the coast at a point several miles to the west of El Alamein. Rommel's troops, exhausted by their rapid progress and harassed by British planes, were incapable of undertaking a further offensive on any large scale for the present. The British defences were accordingly stabilised, reinforcements and supplies continuing to arrive by the long route round the Cape of Good Hope. Rommel's communication-lines were much more advantageously placed, with Tripoli and the short sea-passage to Italy behind him. Although the supreme disaster had for the moment been averted, the enemy remained in dangerous proximity to the Egyptian base.

The loss of Tobruk caused almost as great a shock to public opinion in Britain and America as the fall of Singapore. Mr Churchill was in the United States at the time, and any parliamentary inquiry into the causes of the defeat had

therefore to be postponed till his return. On July 1, 1942, the Government in the House of Commons had to meet a more serious body of criticism than it had as yet encountered, and though the censure-motion only secured twenty-five votes it was obvious that there was a profound uneasiness and discontent with the Government current in most of the groups. That the vote was no larger was due partly to the fact that the revolt was engineered by an anti-Churchill but extreme Conservative section, headed by Sir John Wardlaw-Milne, and partly by the sense that if Mr Churchill was defeated there was no one to take his place. The political situation was therefore different from that at the time of the Norwegian fiasco, when Mr Churchill was at hand to replace Mr Chamberlain. The Government was also in the strong position of being able to withhold full information on the ground that such disclosures would be of advantage to the enemy. But there could be little doubt that within the House and in the country Mr Churchill and his Ministry had lost to a considerable degree the confidence which they had originally inspired. Something was seriously wrong, it was felt, and Mr Churchill's insistence that he must be held responsible for all blame, and that accordingly he would regard any criticism of the Government's military administration as a criticism of himself, while it might be an effective means of stifling outspoken complaint, was not regarded as a satisfactory answer.

This criticism as to the conduct of the Libyan campaign was not merely an emotional reaction to a serious defeat. There were solid grounds for blame. Several Government spokesmen, including Mr Churchill, had emphasised that the VIIIth Army by the autumn of 1941 had been so effectually strengthened as to be able to meet Rommel on equal, if not superior, terms. There was now grave doubt as to whether the anti-tank guns supplied were equal to their task, whether the absence of dive-bombers was not a contributory factor to the defeat, and other technical criticisms. In any event the events of June 13, 1942, seemed to indicate bad staff-work, a suspicion which was confirmed by the changes of command which were announced on August 18, General Alexander succeeding General Auchinleck as Commander-in-Chief. The sensational fall of Tobruk remained a mystery, and there were even rumours of Fifth

Columnist treachery. Stories as to the discipline of the Staff also began to circulate. The number of Staff Officers had apparently been swollen to unnecessary proportions, and some of these were said to be leading a pleasurable existence in the restaurants and hotels of Cairo rather than facing the realities of modern warfare and camping in the desert in reasonable proximity to the front line. One colonial statesman, it was rumoured, had been horrified by the conditions, and this may have been the cause of the two visits which Mr Churchill subsequently paid to Egypt in the course of his journey to Moscow. Whatever the truth of these accusations, there was substance for the suspicion that the British war-machine was still far from proficient, and that the professional military-caste tradition had once again proved itself incapable of learning its bitter lessons sufficiently to face the ordeal and meet the fierce responsibilities of modern warfare.

### *The defence of Stalingrad*

In spite of the fact that the Germans had been attacking continuously in the Crimea during the spring, their expected main offensive was delayed. The Crimean campaign was remarkable for the stubborn defence of Sevastopol: although surrounded on all sides it was not until July 1, 1942, that the Germans could claim to be in possession of this important base. In mid-May Marshal Timoshenko launched an attack in the Kharkov sector and crossed the Donetz river, forcing a gap of seventy miles in the German defences: but on May 19 the Germans commenced a counter-attack. For some days reports of the heavy fighting in this district were confused, but it was clear that Timoshenko had anticipated the Nazi plans for the summer offensive. On July 6, however, the Soviet troops had been compelled to withdraw on the Kursk-Volchansk front, and a desperate struggle was concentrated around Voronezh, a town on the railway from Moscow to Rostov. In spite of a Nazi announcement that this town had been captured on July 7, Soviet forces were still withholding the enemy advance some miles to the west by July 9. The German attack now flared up a hundred miles to the south, and soon the enemy were successfully pressing on towards Rossosh.

The German onslaught was by now in full swing, and the drive was seen to be towards the Volga and the Caucasus. If the Volga could at any point be reached by the enemy it would cut one of the most important channels of supply from the south to the north : at the footholds of the Caucasus lie the Grozny oil-fields and the Caspian port of Baku. The Germans in this second year's campaign were concentrating their full strength on this double objective, and the weight of their onslaught was irresistible. The fiercest fighting had developed towards the end of July in the bend of the Don in the Rostov area. Marshal Timoshenko was compelled steadily to withdraw, but was able to extricate his army and most of its supplies from a dangerous trap.

Meanwhile, the German pressure was also developing to a serious extent on the north-eastern shore of the Black Sea. By the middle of August the naval base of Novorossiisk was threatened, and on August 16 the Soviet High Command reported the evacuation of Maikop, an important oil-centre on the northern slope of the mountains. In spite of the difficulty of the ground the German forces pushed forward until their line reached to an angle at perilous proximity (100 miles) to Grozny, turning north across the Kuma river and covering the towns of Voroshilovsk and Elista. The oil-wells at Maikop had been destroyed before evacuation, but it was reckoned that with some six months' labour the enemy might be able to restore them and draw on them for his own purposes. The Soviet supplies would meanwhile be correspondingly weakened.

It was farther north of this considerable pocket that the German advance attained its most successful dimensions. By August 21 the enemy were within forty miles of Stalin-grad, an advance of some three hundred miles since June. It was towards the end of this month that the Germans were at the very gates of the city and the battle which was to become the supreme epic struggle of the war commenced. It lasted almost three months. On April 26, 1942, Hitler had announced in a speech to the Reichstag that he had not only assumed complete military command but that he was now free to quash judgments in the German courts, to dismiss judges and also any military commander or civil functionary, with full autocratic power. This had been interpreted to imply not only that the Nazi Party was aware

of the probability of internal revolt but that the fissure between the Army and the Party had widened. Hitler's will, in any event, wholly determined military strategy, and the order that Stalingrad must be taken at all costs was his own plan. The capture of this city would undoubtedly have been worth a large price, since it dominates the Volga waterway. On the other hand, the price which was paid for this effort was prodigal, even when the mighty reserves of the German man-power are taken into account. On August 18 the Soviet Information Bureau stated that the German losses for the previous three months were estimated at no less than 1,250,000, of whom 480,000 had been killed. Russian losses for the same period were 606,000 killed, missing and wounded; but this is a small and altogether misleading indication of the appalling losses in human life which the Soviet peoples were suffering as a result of the gallant resistance which they were maintaining.

The German offensive of 1942 was thus aiming at three objectives: the Don bend and the Volga: Astrakhan, with the threat to the Caspian: and the approach to the Black Sea. It was in the Caucasus that the enemy at first had made chief progress, the loss of the oil wells at Maikop being one of the most serious injuries the Soviet Union had yet sustained. By August 24 Nazi troops had crossed the Don and driven a wedge into the Russian defences north-east of Kotelnikovo. By the end of the month they had reached the Black Sea at the mouth of the Kuban river and captured Anapa. By the beginning of September the Germans were in the streets of Stalingrad. On September 30 Hitler, speaking in Berlin, declared: "Stalingrad will be taken. You may be sure of that."

Stalingrad thus became the Verdun of the second war. Stalin's order to his troops was that the enemy must not pass. Day by day, week by week, the struggle continued on a scale and intensity and endurance which has hitherto been unknown in human annals. In spite of perpetual bombing, reinforcements and supplies passed across the river into the beleaguered city. Each yard of the enemy advance was contested. In one month alone the Germans launched one hundred and seventeen attacks. In one day there were twenty-three German onslaughts on a sector only one mile wide, where a Siberian regiment held a

factory site. On several occasions the German air-force made two thousand flights in a single day over the city. There were hand-to-hand fights in which stairways, corridors, and dark corners were the objectives. In these attacks the Nazis concentrated all their weapons, large guns, long-range artillery, anti-tank semi-automatics, six-barrelled mortars and heavy flame-throwing tanks. In this incredible inferno acts of desperate bravery became almost commonplace incidents. One Siberian sapper, whose left hand had been smashed by a splinter, fought on for hours, using his teeth to pull out the pins from hand-grenades. No defence has reached such dimensions in any previous human conflict. And the Soviet troops stood their ground. In Stalingrad the enemy failed to pass.

### *The raid on Dieppe*

When the Germans involved themselves in the immense campaign with the Soviet Union the effect was necessarily to concentrate the main weight of their army in the east and correspondingly to deplete their forces in the west. The cry for a second front increased in intensity through the winter and the summer months of 1942.

So far as the public could judge there was full justification for this demand. Not only were the German defences stretched precariously from Norway to the south of France, but the British Isles were packed with troops whose time could only be employed in prolonged courses of intensive training. Moreover, American soldiers were already arriving in considerable numbers, and the situation, it was felt, was more favourable for invasion than was likely to be the case at any future time. As the German blows on the Russian front grew more formidable discontent with British strategy became more outspoken. It was almost unendurable to stand still and watch the Red Army fighting single-handed at Stalingrad, while no attempt was apparently being made to relieve the pressure. Not only was this an emotional indignation, but there was some substance in the fear that if the German hosts succeeded in dividing Marshal Timoshenko's forces and inflicting real disaster on Russian arms, the position for the Western Allies would have immensely

deteriorated, since any attempt on their part at invasion would then be faced once more with the bulk of the German army transferred to France and the Low Countries.

The Government reply to this criticism was threefold : first, to point to the service of supplies which were being sent to Russia : secondly, to urge that, far from being idle, Britain was playing her part by the heavy bombing-raids over Germany and the occupied countries : and, thirdly, to declare that at any moment the opening of a second front might be expected.

The task of supplying the Soviet Union with tanks, guns, and other munitions was handicapped by the long and perilous route which the convoys were now compelled to take. The main route for both British and American services was, as has already been stated, through the Persian Gulf and thence across the Caucasus or by the Caspian Sea : but to reach the Gulf involved for British ships passage round the Cape of Good Hope. Convoys were also sent by the Arctic Ocean, but the difficulty here was not only the weather and climatic conditions but attack from U-boats operating from Norway. The largest convoy to run this gauntlet reached its Arctic destination in September 1942. It was accompanied by seventy-five British warships of varying sizes. From September 12 to 15 it was subjected to incessant aerial and submarine attack, and accounted for forty aircraft shot down, two U-boats sunk and four damaged. This is but one example of the extreme dangers and hardships which British seamen had to face in the task of supplying their Soviet allies. In the twelve months ending in November 1942, the Allies had sent by the northern route alone 3,052 aircraft, 4,084 tanks, 30,031 vehicles, 831,000 tons of miscellaneous cargo, including medical supplies, 42,000 tons of petrol and aviation spirit, and 66,000 tons of fuel oil. The rate of United States supplies was still considerably behind time.

These figures, though impressive, showed that this form of support, however valuable, was inadequate in itself to lighten the burden which the Soviet Union was carrying. Obviously, it was not in itself sufficient, nor regarded as sufficient by the Soviet Union. As regards the aerial offensive the old controversy was raised as to whether over so large and decentralised an area as Germany and her



acquired territories aerial destruction could prove in any sense decisive. It is true that raids on a scale never before realised and with the heaviest calibre of bomb yet manufactured were launched in the spring. On May 30 Cologne was attacked by over one thousand planes. For ninety minutes the city was subjected to a ceaseless rain of high explosives and incendiaries, the German reports themselves describing the damage as "colossal." Mr Churchill, Sir Archibald Sinclair, and other Government spokesmen promised that attacks on a similar, and even on a greater, scale would become increasingly frequent. This programme could not, however, be carried out till a much later date: it was not until 1943 that these mass-raids became incessant. A series of attacks took place during the summer of 1942 over the Ruhr, Hamburg and other centres, but only at intervals of some weeks. The Germans retaliated by bombing Bath, Norwich, York, Exeter, Canterbury and other centres, these targets being deliberately selected for their historic interest. Great damage was caused, but the strength of the enemy air-force employed was a shadow of the former blitz.

The aerial campaign against Germany at this period unquestionably caused delay and dislocation to German production, but, even if mass-raids could be repeated far more frequently than was actually the case, such operations were at best but a slender substitute for military invasion. The most effective of these raids was carried out on May 16, 1943. The Moehne Dam in the Ruhr district was breached by British planes—to hit this target was itself an achievement of no small skill: an industrial area of fifty miles was consequently flooded. Several hundred inhabitants lost their lives in this action, and 120,000 were rendered homeless. But this devastation was but a foretaste of the fate which was soon to befall the German capital and other German cities.

There remained the third answer which the Government was giving to the agitators for a second front, namely that a second front in Europe was indeed to be opened in the near future. In his address to the House of Commons in November 1942, Mr Churchill confessed that this promise, though it could not be fulfilled, had been made in order to mislead the enemy. It was, no doubt, wholly legitimate under the circumstances of war, thus to play on German

fears, though it is doubtful whether the enemy was in fact deceived. At home, during this summer, there were continual rumours that an immediate offensive was to be launched, and at one time it seemed that these hopes were to be fulfilled.

Ever since the western continent had fallen under the heel of the Nazis a new British technique had been developed, recalling the adventurous exploits of ancient warfare. The Commandos on many a dark night had landed in Norway and in France, and for an hour or more would carry out a miniature temporary invasion. These raids required a special training, great care and courage. Their value was that by the capture of prisoners useful information could sometimes be obtained, local objectives could be destroyed, and the nerves of enemy troops kept on strain. The expedition in September 1941, in Spitzbergen does not strictly fall into the 'Commando' category, but the purpose and effect of the landing was similar: German plans to exploit the coal mines in this Arctic island were forestalled, and the expedition travelled 2,500 miles to and from Britain without mishap. In the early hours of June 4, 1942, a considerable force was landed between Boulogne and Le Touquet. The naval escort sank two patrol vessels while waiting for the re-embarkation of the raiders.

In many quarters it was believed that suddenly one of these Commando enterprises might develop into some far more ambitious undertaking. Hopes were raised high by the news that on August 19, 1942, a much larger offensive had been launched on the French coast in the Dieppe area.

British, Canadian, American and Fighting French troops were engaged. The first aim was to silence the heavy batteries of six-inch guns at Berneval and Varengeville, east and west of the port. The latter of these objectives was successfully attained by Lord Lovat's Commandos, the enemy-battery being overwhelmed and its ammunition-dump exploded. But the landing boats at Berneval were sighted by an enemy sea-patrol which not only inflicted heavy losses on the party but gave the alarm to the battery. Those who managed to get ashore found the curtain of fire so intense that almost all operations on this sector had to be suspended. Major Peter Young, however, with twenty men, against two hundred German gunners, managed to

draw the fire of one of the howitzers away from the Dieppe beach by carrying on a sniping offensive for over four hours, a very daring and useful episode : only a few survivors were rescued. Meanwhile, an attack was being launched on the town's chief beach, supported by landings at Pourville and Puits. The Pourville attempt surprised the enemy, but at Puits the Canadians were engaged in heavy fighting and their losses were heavy. Out of the 5,000 Canadians, 3,500 were casualties. Nearly half the total force were killed, wounded or taken prisoners.

The frontal attack was successful only to a limited extent. The tanks which had been able to get ashore found that the obstructions were too formidable to overcome. After nine hours the operations were at an end. It was in the air that the only real triumph could be claimed. The Germans were compelled to concentrate as large a fighter-force as they had used against the R.A.F. since the Battle of Britain. In twelve hours the R.A.F. made three thousand sorties. Ninety-one enemy aircraft were destroyed against a loss of ninety-eight British, and one-third of the pilots of these planes were rescued.

It is true that the French civilians had been warned by British radio that they should make no attempt to assist the invaders, as the undertaking was no more than a raid : but the publicity given to the undertaking, the B.B.C. describing the course of operations as they proceeded, led the British public to suppose that this was the beginning of a serious campaign. Judged from this aspect the Dieppe attempt was a sorry defeat. Official propaganda stressed the valuable experience which had been gained, but the price which was paid for it was altogether disproportionate. If the landing was of any value for experimental purposes it also provided the enemy with valuable experience as to how to repel a direct attack. Whatever the motives for the Dieppe assault, it would hardly have been possible to choose a more unfavourable ground for invasion. The impression created in the mind of the enemy was that an endeavour to launch a second front had been heavily defeated, largely because it had been carried out with insufficient support. It was certainly calculated to keep enemy defences on the alert.

The expedition was not only carried out with immense gallantry by all ranks, but it was well planned. The timing

of the different operations, by Army, Navy and R.A.F. is an elaborate and difficult undertaking. There was no hitch. Each unit played its part to programme. It is all the more regrettable that such courage and such skill were dissipated on an expedition from which so few valuable results emerged.

On some of these Commando raids it had been found necessary to bind the hands of the prisoners captured until the raiding party had safely re-embarked. The success of such raids depended largely on surprise, speed and silence: unbound prisoners might prove a serious embarrassment, since at any moment they might put up sufficient resistance to warn the defending troops of the presence of invaders. The German Government made use of this technical breach of international agreement regarding prisoners and announced that as a reprisal some of the prisoners taken at Dieppe would be chained. The British Government, after making a protest which was disregarded, announced that counter-reprisals would be taken against a selected number of German prisoners. Criticism of this action was aroused in various quarters. Not only was it felt in many British circles that to imitate Nazi methods was morally reprehensible, but it was pointed out that in a retaliation-race the Germans would be in an advantageous position, since they held a far greater proportion of prisoners. These mistaken tactics were quietly dropped a few weeks later.

### *The situation in 1942*

While public opinion was reconciling itself to the probability that Anglo-American military plans were designed to wait for 1943 or 1944 before any real offensive was undertaken, the High Command was in fact busy in preparation for a campaign which was destined considerably to affect the fortunes of the war. The popular indictment against the British Government, in view of the apparent deadlock in the war, was that Britain seemed to be willing to allow the titanic onslaught on Stalingrad to continue without taking risks which would have drawn the German strength away from the Russian front. The problem as to whether a second front in Europe could at this stage have been attempted will probably always remain debatable: at

least, it might be urged, a series of military raids on the French coast and Norway, at less defended spots than Dieppe, could have been undertaken. The strain on British shipping is perhaps the direct answer to this contention, although the eventual North African campaign showed that that difficulty was not insoluble. But, in the light of subsequent developments, the decision to attack not the heavily protected European coast but the African continent, will be accepted by the majority as having justified itself as the wiser strategy.

On May 5, 1942, British naval and military forces arrived at Courier Bay in Madagascar. The likelihood that the Japanese would seize this important island, so as to use its ports in order to interfere with Allied convoys in the Indian Ocean, had long been foreseen. There was some resistance from the Vichy-French garrisons, and British casualties slightly exceeded 500 men. Diego Suarez was captured two days later: the occupation of Madagascar was completed in November. The British Government declared its intention of in no way interfering with the French status of the colony.

Meanwhile, on May 6, the Japanese after a five months' siege occupied Corregidor, the island fortress on Manila Bay. On May 4, however, a major naval engagement between American and Japanese ships, with Australian, American and British air-support, commenced off the Solomon Islands. It was renewed in the Coral Sea and ended in a decisive enemy defeat. The Japanese, having lost at least eleven craft, including one heavy cruiser and an aircraft carrier, with others damaged, withdrew to the north. In December 1942, Madagascar was handed over to the administration of the Fighting French, this action confirming the assurance that neither Britain nor the United States intended to annex French possessions for their own imperial interests.

If Stalingrad is conspicuous as the fortress which most gallantly and for the longest period withstood the ordeal of military attack, Malta bears the record as the island most persistently attacked from the air. Its strategic importance now that Crete and the Balkans were in enemy hands was immense. But its forward position and adjacency to German aerodromes exposed it to attack. It had been

subjected incessantly to air-raids for over twelve months, and, had not the island possessed ideal cave-shelters, the population could hardly have stood the strain. Only Chungking, a ceaseless target in the long and heroic Chinese struggle, can probably rival this record. With the fall of Tobruk the position of Malta had become more precarious, since the enemy was now virtually in control of the Mediterranean up to the shores of Egypt. Transports bringing munition supplies and food to the island had to run the gauntlet of submarine attack. With great difficulty and considerable losses a large convoy reached the island early in August. The anti-aircraft defences of Malta continued to take a heavy and daily toll of the enemy-raiders.

One of the chief causes of anxiety and of the growing suspicion that British-Soviet relations were deteriorating was the evident absence of joint deliberation between the two military commands. It was therefore with great relief that the British public learnt of Mr Churchill's visit to Moscow on August 12, 1942. He flew first to Cairo, where he conferred with General Smuts. Both on his outward and return journey he inspected the Egyptian front. He stayed at Moscow till August 16, and had several long talks with Stalin; he was accompanied by Mr Averell Harriman, representing the United States.

Mr Churchill's visit to Stalin was a characteristic and courageous act. The news which he brought was, as he had expected, by no means welcome to the Soviet leader, but it was wiser that this should be communicated personally, and not by the usual indirect channels. Churchill had to tell Stalin that no second front in Europe was immediately feasible. But he could promise the near advent of an offensive both in Libya and West North Africa. Stalin, in view of the course of previous Libyan campaigns, was not over-enthusiastic. At best, he pointed out, this would merely engage four Nazi divisions. Mr Churchill, however, expressed his confidence that this undertaking would shortly assume such dimensions that the position in Russia would be directly improved. Stalin on his side promised that, if the situation in Africa did in fact alter the war outlook, he would be prepared to launch a counter-offensive before the winter set in. The interviews, in spite of frank

words and some disagreement, ended on a friendly note. The Russians enthusiastically acclaimed Mr Churchill, but unfortunately interpreted his two-fingered 'V' sign as a gesture indicating the assurance of a second front. Mr Churchill had evidently forgotten that the Latin alphabet is dissimilar from the Slavonic.

As the 1942 summer waned and the chill autumn mists heralded the approach of the longer nights, there were few outward signs that victory for the United Nations was any nearer to realization. The German armies continued to advance across the northern slopes of the Caucasus. Stalingrad was still threatened. The Atlantic menace was as yet far from being overcome. The Japanese might at present be forced to hold their hand, but at any moment a further move to expand their gains must be expected. No solution had been reached in India. The prospect from a short-term angle was not encouraging. In October General Smuts addressed a joint meeting of the two Houses of Parliament on the invitation of Mr Churchill, with Mr Lloyd George, as senior member of the Lower House, in the chair. Although it was not possible for the South African statesman to disclose any positive military information, his speech accordingly consisting of eloquent generalities, he was able to convey the impression that offensive operations were imminent and that the war was about to enter a phase in which the Allies would take the initiative. The tide in the affairs of war was, in fact, about to turn. For the first time the almost unbroken series of British defeats was to give place to an important and decisive triumph. We pass therefore to a brighter chapter in the grim drama of world-upheaval.

## CHAPTER 9

### TURN OF THE TIDE

#### *Victory of El Alamein*

THE Egyptian campaign, launched on October 23, 1942, under General Alexander's and General Montgomery's command, was distinguished from the outset by original and imaginative strategy. On this occasion there were no premature assurances of victory from Cairo. Co-operation between Air Force and Army was complete. The offensive was carefully organised and perfectly executed. Instead of attempting the usual outflanking method, Rommel's forces were engaged by a frontal assault. Accompanied by an immense artillery barrage the infantry were used to break the crust of the enemy defences and prepare the way for the armoured troops. It was not the tanks which made way for the infantry.

In order to appreciate the conditions attending the British offensive it is necessary to recall that on August 30, 1942, Rommel had delivered his long-expected attack. The moon was on the wane, the weather-conditions were perfect for night and day operations, and the road to Cairo was apparently open. But Rommel was too wary to attempt to by-pass the VIIIth Army. As Mr Churchill explained, in a dramatic survey which he gave to the House of Commons on November 11, the German Command was wise enough not to fall into the trap: on the contrary, Rommel engaged the southern flank of the imperial forces with his full strength. But he found himself confronted with an artillery-strength which he had evidently not suspected, and after three days the second battle of Alamein was at an end. British total losses did not exceed two thousand.

Meanwhile, every detail of the coming Allied counter-offensive had been worked out. Every twenty-three yards a 25-pounder gun was stationed and a terrific barrage was opened. Two British armoured divisions and one New Zealand division had been withdrawn after Rommel's defeat at Alamein and subjected to intensive training behind



the lines. A way having been carved through the mine-fields the infantry advanced, accompanied by an air-support so formidable that the enemy was virtually crowded out of the air. The air-arm not only supported the advance but completely disorganised the enemy supply-lines. The "ball of fire," as Mr Churchill described the armoured divisions, burst through the gap, and in an incredibly short space of time the immense fortress in which Rommel had entrenched himself crumbled. Once the Allied forces had broken through the collapse was spectacular. Rommel was subsequently accused of attempting to save his German mechanised divisions at the expense of the Italians, a decision which, if true, may have been wise from a military standpoint but a mistake diplomatically in view of its repercussions on the Italian public. The enemy losses were 59,000, of which 34,000, however, were German: the heavier German casualties suggest that Rommel's discrimination in favour of his own nationals was not successful, though these figures must be reckoned in proportion to the German forces engaged and do not contradict the claim that immense sacrifices were made to ensure the escape of the mechanised divisions. Allied losses did not exceed 13,600.

Though Rommel's defences had been pierced, the collapse of the Axis position was not immediate. The Battle of El Alamein had opened on the night of October 23. A German counter-attack was launched on October 28 but heavily defeated. On October 30 the VIIIth Army again took the offensive but met with stiff resistance. It was on November 4 that news was received of a major victory: more than 260 enemy tanks were destroyed or captured. General von Stumme, who had taken over the command while Rommel was in Germany, was killed, and von Thoma, commander of the German Afrika Korps, held prisoner. The significance of this victory was soon evident. Those forces which escaped capture were soon in headlong retreat. The main difficulty confronting the VIIIth Army was to complete its 'mopping-up' operations and advance quickly enough to take full advantage of the transformed situation. If a retreating force is willing to sacrifice its material it is at an advantage, so far as the rate of march is concerned, compared to advancing troops. In addition, the British pursuit was hampered in its later stages by heavy rains.

The work of harassing the retiring enemy was carried out by the air-arm, which repeatedly bombed the transport and other material still in Rommel's possession. By November 12 Egypt was cleared. Tobruk was reoccupied on November 13, and by November 20, 1942, the Allies had advanced to Benghazi. Rommel's ultimate tactics were now to fall back on Tripoli, so as to make a stand where he could be supplied by the short sea-route from Sicily. Round Agheila he was expected to assemble such of his army as had been extricated, and in so naturally fortified a position it appeared probable that he would make a stand, strengthened by the reinforcements which had been rushed to his assistance by air and sea from Italy. There seemed to be every indication that a second big battle would be fought at this point, and by the middle of December General Montgomery was ready to launch his offensive. But on this occasion Rommel had no intention of contesting the advance. By December 13 the VIIIth Army had broken through the German positions and Agheila was in its hands.

For a short hour on Sunday, November 15, the church bells in Britain, which had been silenced since 1940 so as to be ready to serve as warning for invasion, were ordered to be rung. The celebration was an expression of British rejoicing for the first military victory over the Germans which had been achieved. Although the immense resources of the enemy were still intact, what was so heartening in the news was that at last British military power had shown itself to be well organised and its plans brilliantly executed. Aerial and artillery supplies had been adequate and the enemy had been outmatched. But it was not only on the plains of Libya that the initiative had passed to the United Nations. Already the Axis fortunes in North Africa were threatened by a new development. A daring step had been taken in the west.

### *The Allied invasion of French North Africa*

The possibilities of a second front had been surveyed by the American and British Commands for a long while, as urgently as they were being canvassed in public. By the end of June 1942, a decision was reached. While invasion

of the west European coast was considered at present to be too formidable, it was resolved to prepare for an expedition to North Africa from the western extremity. The original plan had been to land at Casablanca, with Dakar as a further objective. The more ambitious campaign in Algeria was substituted as a result of assurances that the strength of de Gaulle's supporters was greater in Algeria than had at first been supposed. This daring invasion of French North Africa had several obvious advantages over the alternative plan of landing in France proper or the Netherlands. The resistance of the French in any case would be less formidable than that of the Germans. In general, the French colonial attitude was, it was believed, less likely to be controlled by Vichy policy than France herself. The dangers from submarine and air-attack would not be so acute as in the North Sea and English Channel, though fighter cover would not be available, as would have been the case in operations within easy distance of England. If the undertaking proved successful, not only would an important step have been taken towards freeing the Mediterranean, at least to the extent of opening up a more direct route of supplies for Russia, but the opportunity of dealing deadly blows at Italy, the weakest link in the Axis defences, would be exposed.

There can be no doubt that the decision was strategically wise. It offered a wide scope for manœuvre and would seriously increase the enemy's responsibilities. The plans were kept so secret that the enemy was to a large extent taken unawares. Not only was the vast plan entailed in carrying out these operations worked out carefully, but the undertaking synchronised exactly with General Montgomery's victory at the other end of the Mediterranean.

It must be remembered that, if there were Soviet doubts as to the African campaign, the British-American plan rested on a complete faith in the Russian ability to withstand the German attack. Had the Red Army suffered serious defeat and enabled Hitler to withdraw some sixty divisions from the East, an advance through Spain to close the Western Mediterranean might have threatened the expeditionary force with serious disaster. The project of invading French Morocco and Algeria was decided, as has been stated, in June 1942. Diplomatic machinery was set in motion for the purpose of discovering the probable

attitude of the Vichy French authorities in Africa. By the end of August the arrangements for carrying out this difficult and in many respects hazardous naval and military expedition were complete. Though the secret had been well kept, the Axis Command scented trouble, owing to the accumulation of transports at Gibraltar and other activities in this area, but was uncertain as to where and when the blow would fall. Zero hour was fixed for November 8, 1942. American and British troops were landed at Oran, Casablanca, Algiers, and on November 11 even as far east as Bougie. These operations were entirely successful, and, though there was at first some slight resistance on the part of the Vichy French garrisons, casualties were light. The whole expedition, in which the British 1st Army were co-operating, was under the command of the American General Eisenhower. Having consolidated their positions the American-British forces advanced towards Tunisia.

Not only the general strategic idea, but the moment was happily conceived: as already mentioned, it coincided with the defeat of Rommel by the VIIIth Army. Moreover, the possibilities opened up were so considerable that it required no undue optimism to see that the initiative was definitely passing into the hands of the United Nations.

The actual strategy, however, suffered from a tendency which was discernible in several Anglo-American operations: it was not bold enough. The experience of Dunkirk had deeply affected the mind of the High Command. Thus, no naval landings at Bizerta or Tunis were attempted, on the ground that the enemy's dive-bombers would have wrought devastating results or would have rendered the neighbouring aerodromes untenable. Yet more than fifty Allied raids on these airfields and harbours were carried out, and nevertheless the Germans were able to bring over 70,000 troops and a strong air-force by sea and air, which immensely prolonged the campaign.

As a military operation the campaign was, indeed, less successful than Montgomery's advance in the east. Nine days after the landing at Algiers the infantry had reached the Djebel Abiod pass, and by November 26 Medjez-el-Bab was captured, in spite of fierce resistance by the enemy. But although Tebourba was taken that evening, by November 27 German defence stiffened and by the 29th the amount

of enemy dive-bombing had increased to serious proportions. Although the 1st Army, which at this stage consisted only of two infantry brigades, parachutists, a few commandos and a few tanks, had penetrated almost as far east as Djedeida, they were driven back, and even Tebourba had to be abandoned. An immediate break-through to Tunis was thus thwarted, owing to the fact that supplies by the long sea-route from America and Britain, and thence by the five-hundred-mile single-track railway from Algiers to Tebourba, were insufficient. The reverse at Tebourba would have involved a retreat on a grave scale had not General Anderson's small body of infantry with great gallantry stood firm. According to Mr Stimson the excuse for this set-back was that the Allies had advanced too rapidly; two months had been allowed for, not four weeks. As the Germans were able to send troops at the rate of 8,000 a week into Tunis, this explanation was hardly reassuring: to attack before the enemy was strongly reinforced was so obviously essential that the organization of supplies should have been such as to enable the expedition to cover the ground in as short a time as possible. Moreover, the Germans at once retaliated by making what should have been seen to be the obvious move: they occupied Bizerta, the key-position in this theatre, since as a port it would serve as a convenient base for the short sea-route from Sicily. The enemy utilised this advantage by pouring equipment rather than men into the Tunisian defence-zone. By the middle of January 1943, General Eisenhower's force was at a standstill. Bad weather, the lengthy supply-route, indifferent roads, the failure to acquire aerial landing-grounds and other difficulties contributed to the failure of exploiting the initial surprise to the extent which had at first seemed possible. The plan had been imperfectly executed, and the Allies found themselves compelled to maintain at great shipping expense a position on the enemy's flank without being able to strike at it.

Disappointing as were the results of the military arm in this adventure, the Allies found themselves diplomatically in even deeper waters. The French were divided into various factions, for, as might have been expected at this uncertain phase of the war, their allegiances were confused. Many of them were still identified with the Vichy cause. Some were open adherents of de Gaulle. Between these extremes were

a majority who in the event of an Allied victory might be expected to rally against the Nazi enemy, but whose immediate loyalties were far from determined. Whichever faction the Allies favoured created animosity and suspicion in the rival quarters. American-British diplomacy does not seem fully to have recognised the extreme delicacy of the situation. The general line adopted was that of accepting the services of all who were prepared to help. It was the easiest way, but it was a way fraught with extreme danger.

The United States had until recently persisted in preserving relations with Vichy France. It was now agreed to accept the co-operation of Admiral Darlan. Darlan's record could have left no doubt as to his quisling nature. He had helped to direct the Government of Vichy. Under his authority thousands of prisoners who had fought for democracy in Spain had been interned in North African concentration-camps. No attempt on his part had ever been made to disband the Service d'Ordre Légionnaire — an entirely Fascist body — or the Fascist Parti Populaire Français. Many of his subordinate functionaries in Algeria were men with definitely Axis sympathies. From the standpoint of military expediency it could be urged that Darlan's offer to co-operate with the Allied forces had saved unnecessary bloodshed. On November 11, after three days' fighting, he ordered the "cease fire" through Algeria and Morocco. On December 8 Dakar and French West Africa were surrendered to the Allies at his instance. But the price was a heavy and dangerous one to pay. On November 20 Darlan broadcast from Radio Algiers the announcement that he claimed to be "the true interpreter of the Marshal's (Pétain's) thoughts." "I am following," he said, "his earlier instructions in accepting the aid of the Americans and their Allies for the liberation and the integral restoration of French sovereignty." On December 1 the Radio Morocco broadcast a proclamation by Darlan declaring that he assumed "all the rights and responsibilities of a Government."

The immediate effect of American willingness to come to terms with a Fascist sympathiser was that strained relations were at once apparent with General de Gaulle and the Fighting French. It is true that on November 27 both Darlan and General Giraud, who was now in command

of French forces, were officially deprived of French nationality by Vichy. But the incongruous position was reached of two French armies in Algeria, both in co-operation with the Allies, and each standing for fundamentally opposing ideals. Although President Roosevelt insisted that there was no intention of allowing Darlan to occupy any permanent position of authority, deep uneasiness was caused both in Britain and the United States. Not only might a man with Darlan's record at any moment endanger the military position by stabbing the Allied armies in the back, but an unfortunate precedent might be created as regards Italy where, when the time for Mussolini's overthrow became ripe, there would be many Fascists anxious to play the same role, if thereby they could establish a reactionary Government with Allied assistance. The fact that America had been willing to come to terms with Darlan suggested that the Allied statesmen did not yet realise that the war was rapidly taking the shape of a revolution, a series of civil wars between the peoples and the rulers of the Axis-controlled countries. The ugliest feature of the Darlan incident was that it could have been no hasty decision, but represented, on the contrary, a policy deliberately determined. In their preparations the Allies had reckoned with the possibility of Darlan's offer and agreed that they would make use of it. By making use of it, even to a limited extent, they were going far to wreck the aims for which the war was professedly being waged. It was not reassuring to learn that the Hapsburg heir, Archduke Otto, was put in command of the Austrian volunteer legion in America, and that Mr Stimson, Secretary for War, sent him birthday greetings, addressing him as Otto of Austria, a title eminently displeasing both to the Czechoslovaks and to Austrian refugee democrats.

Hitler's immediate reply to the North African expedition was to march into Unoccupied France, thus cancelling the terms of the 1940 armistice. The Pétain Government was accordingly placed in a position of even greater servitude than hitherto, Laval now declaring with an unqualified emphasis that the Vichy-French order was dependent on a Nazi victory. The purpose of the German invasion was significant of Nazi fears that there might be an attempt on the part of the French people to throw in their lot with their fellow-countrymen in the African colonies. It was

also designed to protect the Axis Mediterranean frontiers from a possible landing. If Darlan had really thrown over his former allegiances Hitler could not be sure that other Vichy statesmen might not follow his example.

But, more particularly, the German thrust was aimed at Toulon. Here a considerable remnant of the French navy had been stationed since the debacle. The sympathies of most of the ratings was known to be actively anti-Axis, and it was subsequently claimed that Darlan had given the command that they should steam out of Toulon and escape to the African coast. The officers, however, hesitated on account of their formal loyalties to Vichy and exhorted the men to await events calmly. As a result the opportunity to escape was lost. On the night of November 26 a series of violent explosions lit up the skies. The navy was committing a heroic suicide rather than fall into German hands. The ships were scuttled and sunk, and though the destruction was not so complete as had been at first hoped, it would take the enemy many months to raise the vessels and attempt to restore some of them for commission. There was unfortunately a heavy sacrifice of life involved in this dramatic gesture. When the Germans arrived early on the morning of November 27, it was to find that the famous naval base was a scene of lurid ruin.

Meanwhile, across the Spanish frontier developments of some significance were taking place. On November 17 a decree was issued ordering partial mobilization, ostensibly for the purpose of asserting Spanish neutrality. In some quarters it was supposed that Sir Samuel Hoare had at last brought off a deal with Franco, perhaps at the cost of promising some degree of support for the Franco domination in a post-war settlement, on condition that Spain refused to be party to any German attempt to advance through the peninsula and threaten the western gate of the Mediterranean. As against this conjecture, however, the fact that Suñer, Franco's pro-Axis brother-in-law, was reinstated as a member of the Council of the Falange, was ominous. Moreover, Spanish exports to Germany and Italy had risen from 30 millions pesetas worth of goods to 137 millions in 1941: exports to Britain and America had dropped from 211 millions pesetas in 1940 to 82 millions in the following year. On December 5, 1942, Franco himself telegraphed to



Hitler, expressing his wishes "for a triumph of German arms in the glorious enterprise of liberating Europe from the Bolshevik terror." Those who had supported the cause of the rebels in the Spanish conflict and had represented General Franco as a crusader and 'Christian gentleman' were once more afforded the opportunity of perceiving the logical implications of their own affinities.

The immediate consequence of the North African victory was to expose Italy to greater vulnerability from the air. During the first weeks of December, Turin, in particular, was subjected to raids of an intensity unwitnessed since the bombardment of Cologne and Düsseldorf.

The delicate situation to which the American Command, with the acquiescence of British authority, had exposed itself by accepting the aid of Darlan and other doubtful elements in North Africa, was to some extent eased by the murder of Darlan on Christmas Eve, 1942, at the hands of a young Frenchman. The first repercussions of this incident accentuated the difficulties of the position. Having recognised Darlan as an ally, American official comment was compelled to lament his violent end in terms which were visibly unreal in view of the prevailing British, and indeed the bulk of American, popular sentiment. Assassination is an odious weapon, as indeed is war. But, had the previous attempt on Laval been successful, denunciations heaped on his antagonist would hardly have been appropriate. Conditions were improved by the appointment of General Giraud, a soldier who professed to hold no political opinions. But the difficulties of the situation were by no means resolved. The American State Department continued to treat General de Gaulle, who had come to be regarded by anti-Vichy Frenchmen as the symbol of active resistance against the enemy, and his 'Free French' organization with considerable reserve. The British Foreign Office was primarily anxious to maintain the closest diplomatic co-operation with the United States, and consequently it was American rather than British policy which determined Allied-French relations. The result of the American handling of this highly dangerous problem was that there were two French forces in the field during the North African operations, between which there existed jealousy and suspicion. The friction arose not so much because General Giraud's

followers were regarded as doubtful allies: it was rather that the United States seemed to be determined to cold-shoulder General de Gaulle. Nor was the issue merely a personal rivalry. The danger of this *impasse* was that the American State Department appeared disposed to exercise its own authority in determining what provisional organization should represent France. The official justification of the British-American attitude was that the mass of French people were unable to exercise the right to decide what form of Government they would ultimately adopt, and that any provisional authority set up must not be accorded full sovereign power. The same objection, however, might have been raised against the jurisdiction of the Polish, Yugoslavian or Greek provisional Governments, which the Allies treated as fully legitimate. The fear which this incident aroused in many circles was that it indicated the probable attitude regarding the claim of the peoples of other occupied countries to choose their own representatives in the future, and the determination of America and Britain to have an influence in preventing the setting-up of Governments in Europe which they would not themselves regard as suitable.

It was not until June 3, 1943, that agreement was reached between the two generals, and one united body, the French Committee of National Liberation, formally recognised. Even then the American recognition was conspicuously qualified. While the British Government, on August 27, formally accepted the Committee as "administering those French overseas territories which acknowledge its authority" and stated its intention of "giving effect . . . as far as possible" to the request of the Committee to be accepted "as the body qualified to ensure the administration and defence of all French interests," the American Government, in assenting to the same formula, stated that "the extent to which it may be possible to give effect to this desire must be reserved for consideration in each case as it arises." Both the British and American recognitions differed from the Soviet reply which stated that it recognised the Committee "as representing the State interests of the French Republic and as leader of all French patriots fighting the Hitlerite tyranny, and to exchange with it plenipotentiary representatives."

The reluctance of the American Government to accord full recognition to the de Gaullist Committee, and the acquiescence of the British Government in this reluctance, continued for several months, even after Giraud had resigned and there was no longer the excuse for maintaining that the position was complicated by the personal rivalry between the two generals. The American-British attitude remained one of extreme caution and suspicion towards de Gaulle and his French National Committee. It was argued that de Gaulle was aiming at a single-party obedient to himself and that this policy might develop Fascist tendencies. The fact remained, however, that the rapidly increasing movements of French underground resistance, however varied their political complexion, were united in recognising de Gaulle as the leader of all French resistance. The failure of the Allied Governments to give the French National Committee full support resulted accordingly in a growing resentment among the French resistance movement as a whole. By the spring and summer of 1944 the Allied military plans necessitated large-scale area bombings of important French towns. Nantes, Rouen, Rheims, were among the chief sufferers, and the civilian death-roll was heavy. This destruction no doubt was inevitable in strategical interests; but, coupled with the Allied political policy towards the National Committee and the suspicion that the Americans intended to assume responsibility for the Government and financial administration of French territory when freed, could hardly be expected to inspire confidence among the French people. This difficult situation continued until July 1944, when de Gaulle visited the United States. As a result of his visit the American attitude underwent a perceptible change, and the position was eased.

### *The Initiative passes to the Allies*

We must now return to a consideration of the course of events which were taking place on the Soviet front. It was not until October 1942 that the German attacks on Stalin-grad were seen to be lessening. To the north-west of the city Timoshenko's relief-army was steadily consolidating its position. On November 1 the Soviet troops broke

through the first line of German defences south of the city. The German general, von Bock, met his first serious obstacle at Voronezh, where the Red Army fought so stubbornly that the Nazis were obliged to change their tactics and divert their main offensive to the south. In the Caucasus, also, the tide was turning. By November 20 the enemy in the Ordzhonikidze area were in full retreat.

The Soviet counter-attack had opened. Between November 19 and 29 the Russians had taken 66,000 prisoners and 2,000 guns. By the 30th the Germans were being driven back south of Stalingrad to within twelve miles of Kotelnikovo, which was captured in December. On December 15 a major offensive was launched in the Middle-Don area, verging on Millerovo, an important railway junction on the Moscow-Rostov railway. It was evident that the capture of Rostov would seriously endanger the German forces in the Caucasus.

General Zhukov, who was now in command of the Soviet forces in the south, was seen to be carrying out a new and extremely effective military technique. This consisted of attacking and cutting across vital railway communications available to the enemy, and then of by-passing the 'hedgehog' defences. A swift advance was thus possible, without waiting to destroy the enemy's fortified positions, these positions themselves being threatened by the encircling movement of the rapid Soviet progress.

The Soviet winter campaign was now flaming up at many points along the vast front. By January 1, 1943, Velikye Luki was captured. This was the most strongly fortified 'hedgehog' which had as yet fallen into Soviet hands. It lies 280 miles west of Moscow, and its capture at once put the Russians astride of the enemy's chief supply-line from Germany by the Riga route.

The Soviet advances in the Caucasus were equally sensational. Maikop was entered by the Red Army on January 30. In the Don area Chernyshkovsky, an important town and railway junction, was taken on January 4. Nor were these the only sections of the front aflame. By the middle of January Schluesselburg and other fortified positions outside Leningrad had fallen to a Soviet sortie in a seven-day battle. The siege of Leningrad was relieved. It had already lasted for sixteen months, during which

period the citizens had kept up a stubborn and heroic defence, in spite of immense hardships and danger due to shelling, aerial bombardment and shortage of fuel and food.

By the end of January 1943, Stalingrad had won its supreme victory. The German troops which had been ordered by their Fuehrer to take the city were themselves trapped. A hundred thousand had been killed and over 91,000 captured. The prisoners included Field-Marshal von Paulus, and the XIth Army Corps Commander. Not only had Hitler's boast been falsified, but the Germans had suffered a major disaster. It was in recognition of the admiration felt by the British people for this heroic defence and the magnificent victory which followed it that King George VI ordered a richly embellished sword to be prepared. It was subsequently handed to Marshal Stalin by Mr Churchill at the Teheran meeting in December 1943.

But the Soviet campaigns were not yet exhausted. On February 8 the important town of Kursk was taken, and by the end of January the Red Army were at the gates of Rostov. Kharkov fell to the Red Army on February 16. Surveying the Soviet military strategy as a whole one cannot fail to be impressed by the close relationship of each of these regional offensives to a general plan. The enemy were allowed no respite and little opportunity for consolidating their strength on any one sector. On the other hand, except at Stalingrad, the German forces were not cut off. In the Donetz Basin, indeed, Nazi resistance stiffened, and on February 26 a counter-attack was launched: the Red Army was forced to give ground. On March 15 the Red Army sustained a serious set-back: Kharkov was recaptured by the enemy.

Towards the end of June 1943, the Germans launched an attack upon the Soviet bulge round Kursk. There was some doubt as to whether this marked the opening of a summer offensive on the scale of the previous year. But gradually it was disclosed that the Germans were no longer in a position to undertake a campaign of those proportions. The offensive was rather intended to delay the imminent Soviet attack. In the Lake Ilmen region Marshal Timoshenko had already captured Demyansk, after an eight-days' battle. The enemy may, however, have been in some doubt as to where the main thrust would be delivered. Not until

the closing weeks of July was this doubt resolved. The Red Army had gathered its forces for an attack on the Orel front, with the prizes of Orel and Bryansk as their objectives. The initiative beyond all question had finally passed into Russian hands.

Meanwhile, the year 1943 had opened in North Africa with both success and failure to be registered on the Allied balance-sheet. By mid-January General Montgomery's VIIIth Army was only thirty miles distant from Tripoli. But the German attack from Faid and Sened had been effective against the Western forces. After three days' fighting the Americans were compelled in February to evacuate Feriana and Sbeitla.

February also saw the VIIIth Army halted before the Mareth Line defences and completing preparations for breaking through these fortified positions. In March Rommel attempted to delay the new offensive by a counter-attack in front of Mareth. It was a costly experiment, involving the loss of more than fifty tanks. Von Arnim meanwhile continued his campaign in Northern Tunisia and on March 9 seized the village of Sejanane.

The American contingents were undergoing their baptism of fire from the formidable German army, and it was not to be expected that at first they would be able to withstand the onslaught as successfully as seasoned troops. Hitherto, the mission of the United States had been to act as chief arsenal for the Allied armies. President Roosevelt was, indeed, able to announce that in 1942 the United States had turned out 48,000 military planes, more than the total united output of Germany, Italy and Japan. Now Americans were to enter on their military obligations against the Nazi foe, in addition to their existing military commitments in the Far East.

On March 21 General Montgomery launched his big attack on the Mareth Line on a six-mile front. The attack had been heralded by an intense bombardment from the air. By the end of the first day the Line had been penetrated in the extreme north. By the 23rd the VIIIth Army had seized a bridgehead in the Line, 5,000 yards wide and 1,500 yards in depth, and had taken more than 3,000 prisoners.

Rommel's resistance was determined. The bridgehead

was temporarily recaptured. A surprise outflanking movement at El Hamma was, however, the decisive factor. This operation was carried out by General Freyberg in spite of considerable obstacles. The distance covered was over 200 miles of extremely difficult ground, with perpetual sandstorms driving into the faces of the troops. It was in the Mareth attack that a new type of heavy calibre guns were carried by Hurricane fighters, known as 'tank-busters.'

By March 31 Rommel had been driven back to positions over by Wadi Akarit, but here he was unable to make any effectual stand. At 4.30 a.m. on a moonless night, six days later, an attack was launched north of Gabes by British and Indian infantry. The enemy appears to have been taken almost completely by surprise. By noon all the dominant positions had been captured.

Montgomery now pressed forward at the rate of forty miles a day. The enemy attempted to hold the Allied advance at Enfidaville. A desperate struggle took place on the base of the prominent promontory, known as Takrouna Hill, on April 19. Montgomery's main thrust was now northwards, along the coast road.

By April 1 the 1st Army, with the American and French contingents, were now active in the west. They had advanced to a point less than fifteen miles from Mateur. Mateur fell to the Allies at the beginning of May.

The enemy position was rapidly deteriorating, but the end came more suddenly than most observers had anticipated. Both Tunis and Bizerta were captured by the advancing forces, and Ferryville was occupied by the Americans. By May 11 the enemy was surrounded and held only a small pocket of ground, an eighty square mile area west of Zaghuan. Rommel had already escaped to Europe. The determined and courageous stand which had been sustained in other theatres of war by defeated German forces was not attempted on this occasion: indeed, a conspicuous feature of the closing phase of this campaign is that the Italians fought more courageously than their allies. On May 12 150,000 men were taken prisoners, 200 tanks and 1,000 guns captured, and masses of motor-vehicles and aircraft abandoned. Whole companies of enemy troops surrendered. There was little attempt to

imitate the British tactics at Dunkirk and rescue the defeated forces. General von Arnim was taken prisoner the same day. All resistance was at an end. The first important victory by British-American troops had been gained. The whole of North Africa was now clear of enemy occupation, and the first step towards freeing the Mediterranean achieved. Now the stage was at last set for an attempt to invade the European mainland.

The importance of the North African victory in the general conduct of the war was symbolised by a conference held at Casablanca on January 14, 1943, the largest conference of Allied chiefs which had yet been held. President Roosevelt was present with the heads of the American army, navy and air force. Mr Churchill was accompanied by the heads of the British forces. Stalin had been invited, but, in view of the critical stage of the Eastern campaign, his absence was inevitable. General Chiang Kai-Shek was also too deeply committed to his immediate and serious responsibilities to make the journey. The Casablanca conference surveyed the progress of the war as a whole and drew up its plans. The Russians were consulted: indeed, the primary purpose of the next Allied move was designed to relieve the Soviet forces as expeditiously as possible by an offensive which would draw off German divisions from the Eastern front. Though the actual decisions naturally could not be disclosed, it was not difficult to guess what the next move would be. Sicily was the outpost which was most directly threatened by the African victory.

### *The Allies capture Sicily*

A necessary pause for consolidation followed the North African victory. It was not until the middle of July 1943 that the attack on Sicily was launched. It was preceded by the capture of the small key-islands of Lampedusa and Linosa on June 12 and 13 respectively. Both these islands had been heavily bombed, and the surrender of the first constituted one of those cinema-like adventures which occasionally stand out amid the mechanised mass-fighting of this war. A British fighter-plane was forced to land on



Lampedusa. The pilot expected, temporarily at least, to be made prisoner. Instead of this he was met by a party from the fortress waving a white flag. Single-handed he had captured the island.

The occupation of Sicily was not necessarily a commitment to the plan for invading Italy which was actually followed and concerning which much criticism has been raised. So long as Sicily remained in enemy hands any expedition in the Mediterranean would be comparatively menaced. There is evidence, however, to show that the Germans expected the main immediate attack to fall on Sardinia. They also miscalculated the location of the actual landing in Sicily. They anticipated that it would take place on the western tip of the island, and considerable German forces were concentrated in that area.

The landing had been fixed for the early morning of July 10. On the evening of the day before a heavy gale sprang up, an unusual and unpleasant phenomenon for this time of year, with a rough sea. This would have seriously increased the difficulties of disembarkation, and the weather was watched with increasing anxiety. But ninety minutes before zero-hour the storm miraculously died down. At 3.0 a.m. under a clear sky and a bright half-moon the first soldiers waded through the surf to the silent shore. A heavy bombing attack farther north partially distracted the enemy's attention. The first landing met with no more than slight local resistance. The zone which had been chosen was mainly defended by Italian forces. The landing was adequately covered by fighters and naval bombardment, and proceeded smoothly. The civilian population in Sicily was known to be largely anti-Fascist. Moreover, the months of preparation had not been wasted. Each unit concerned had been made familiar with the ground and buildings to be attacked, and knew the exact location of their own immediate objective by study of a scale-model on which every single house was marked. The initial phase of the invasion was carried out with clock-like precision, as a result of this admirable training.

Immediately the enemy had become aware that the main attack had started and that the Allied plans were the complete occupation of Sicily, six German divisions were flown to the island. Resistance stiffened: but the British,

Canadian and American forces rapidly commenced an assault on Pachino, a few miles from Cape Passero, and captured the aerodrome. Syracuse, Pozzallo, Gela and a number of other positions soon fell to Allied arms. Within two days from the landing over two thousand prisoners had been captured.

The American forces on the west succeeded in taking the first big town, Agrigento: they also seized the Comiso airfields. The VIIIth Army were meanwhile pressing through Augusta on towards the Catanian plain. Against them were ranged two crack German divisions, the Hermann Goering and the 15th Panzers. They advanced to the outskirts of Catania and then halted. For some days there was a lull in the battle, which in many quarters at home was interpreted as a hold-up. General Montgomery's method was always to wait until he had massed his full available resources, and then to strike for the final assault.

The Americans and Canadians meanwhile were pressing on towards the heart of Sicily. Some American detachments turned west towards the ports of Marsala and Trapani. Palermo, the ancient capital, was taken after a three days' assault. Two days later both Marsala and Trapani fell. To the north-east the Canadians were advancing along the coastal area, the effect of these combined movements being that the enemy were forced back to the Messina apex.

It was now the end of July. For a brief period all movement appeared to have died down. The American VIIth Army had already overrun the whole of central and west Sicily and made contact with the Canadian left flank. Pollina, Castelbuono, Gangi and Nicosia fell, as they resumed their advance. The Canadians were caught up in rugged country which offered every advantage to the defending forces. On August 5 Montgomery struck and Catania was entered by the victorious VIIIth Army. On August 6 the Americans captured Troina after five days of heavy fighting.

British naval units bombarded the coastal road and railway leading to Taormina, which was not taken until August 16. The VIIIth Army were now advancing towards the base of Mount Etna. Bronte was captured on August 8. Two days later the Americans joined up with the British in the Bronte area. The Americans made a further success-

ful landing by night near the mouth of the river Naso, thus bringing in valuable reinforcements for the final assault.

The entry of the Allied forces into Messina on August 17 marked the climax. At the same time the adjacent islands of Lipari and Stromboli surrendered to an American naval attack. Enemy resistance was at an end: the occupation of Sicily was complete. It had been an admirably manœuvred and planned expedition, not without its hazards, but from first to last excellently staffed and energetically carried out. The conquest of Sicily had taken six weeks in all. Now the stage was set for the first assault by the British-American forces on the mainland of Europe itself.

## CHAPTER 10

### INVASION OF ITALY

#### *Italy surrenders*

THE assault on Sicily had been carried out so successfully that there was every reason to believe that not only the actual operations but the strategy of the greater campaign would be equally well conducted. Dramatic events had occurred in Italy even before the Sicilian conquest was completed. By July 25, 1943, the existence of a political crisis had become evident, for on that day Mussolini was expelled from the dictatorship. His fall was ignominious: the Fascist Grand Council turned unanimously against him. His end was that neither of hero nor of martyr. The man who had won a cheap and cruel victory in Abyssinia, who had shamelessly broken his pledges over Spain, and who had waited till he could safely stab France in the back, merely faded out of the picture. Not a voice was raised to lament his fate.

The Italian war-position had been growing increasingly serious. Italy had failed in every undertaking. Her North African possessions were lost, her fleet was immobile, her cities were open targets for the Allied bombers, and now Sicily itself was invaded. The spirit both of soldiers and civilians was apathetic, and the people were in no condition to meet the threat of the coming direct attack. A hurried visit of the Duce to Hitler in order to plead for sufficient help to withstand the Allied invasion had proved fruitless: Hitler, with his commitments in the East, could not guarantee the degree of reinforcements which Mussolini needed. Mussolini returned to Rome with empty hands. Here he found a hostile Grand Council and Party awaiting him: even the King could now defy him. In vain the Duce stormed and raved and tried to assert his old authority. The Council called on him to resign. There was a scene in the street immediately after the conference which fittingly symbolised his complete downfall. Mussolini, emerging from the conference-chamber, still incredulous .

that he could have been defeated and defied, found that his own car was no longer in attendance. He demanded that it should be found at once and that he should not be kept waiting. A Fascist officer informed him that he no longer possessed a car. He must drive under escort in a military vehicle. After a few angry shouting protests Mussolini submitted. He was now a prisoner.

His career was illuminated by one further episode which brought him publicity. Hitler, perhaps to his credit, did not desert his friend. Confined in a lonely country residence on the Gran Sasso, Mussolini was rescued on the night of September 8 by Nazi parachutists and carried off to Germany. The German parachutist force was so considerable that it surprised and overwhelmed the Italian guards. The exploit was daringly conceived and executed, and there is no reason to suppose that there was any complicity on the part of the Italians. Henceforward the curtain of obscurity descends upon the former Duce until his actual death. A German attempt to set up a new Mussolini-Fascist Government was no more than a shadow-gesture. Ciano, De Bono and three other members of the former Grand Council were tried and executed by the Fascists for their complicity in Mussolini's downfall. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the Italian nation, of all classes and all political allegiances, had no further use for a dictator who had led them finally to ruin and defeat.

The significance of these events from the war-standpoint was obviously of primary importance. The overthrow of the Duce and the establishment of a new Government under Marshal Badoglio could only mean one thing: Italy intended to surrender. Clearly the situation was one which required careful and astute diplomatic handling. The British Government was mainly concerned to make no move which might precipitate a revolution. Mr Churchill, in a speech delivered on July 27, 1943, explained that "it would be a grave mistake when Italian affairs are in this flexible, fluid and formative condition for the rescuing Powers, Britain and the United States, so to act as to break down the whole structure and expression of the Italian State." In other words, nothing must be done to encourage an outbreak of revolution, even though a revolutionary rising might throw Italy actively on to the

side of the Allies before the Germans had time to act. In apparent contrast to this attitude the British broadcast message to the Italian people, on July 16, declared that "the time has come for you to decide whether Italians shall die for Mussolini and Hitler, or live for Italy and for civilization." Here was a clear invitation to the people to revolt, with no reference to the danger of "breaking down the structure of the Italian State."

A provisional Government was formed under the leadership of Marshal Badoglio. Pietro Badoglio, a soldier of seventy-two, had taken over command of the Abyssinian war from De Bono in 1935, and had been appointed Viceroy of the conquered territory. He had been Chief of the Italian General Staff for some eighteen years and, as the scapegoat for the defeats in Greece, had resigned his post in December 1940. He was supposed to have been critical on more than one occasion of Mussolini and politically was monarchist rather than fascist. His Government was composed mainly of those who had served under the old regime but who had not been enthusiastic supporters of the Duce. The emergence of the new Government represented, therefore, no more than a 'palace revolution.' In the north, at Milan and Turin, the workers were breaking out from the long night of Fascist oppression, downing tools and demonstrating openly for the Allied cause. Fierce fighting against the Germans took place in some of the northern Italian cities. On August 7, 12, 14, 15 and 16 bombs were rained down by Allied planes on these areas. Mr Churchill was at Quebec, in conference with President Roosevelt and heads of the American and British services, for the purpose mainly of planning out the Far Eastern campaign. An urgent message was sent by him to General Alexander, emphasizing the need for hastening as rapidly as possible the invasion of the Italian mainland, rather than of waiting for the date originally fixed. On August 15 an Italian envoy had made contact with Sir Samuel Hoare at Madrid, with full credentials from Badoglio, to state that when the Allied armies landed in Italy the Italian Government was prepared to join with them against Germany. Mr Churchill and President Roosevelt maintained close touch with the British Cabinet, and Stalin was informed. A further meeting with the envoy took place in Lisbon on

August 19 when he was told that the Allies could only accept 'unconditional surrender.' The military terms of the surrender had already been arranged and were presented at this meeting. On the 23rd the envoy made his way back to Rome, not without difficulty, for secrecy was obviously essential, promising to bring back his Government's answer by the 31st. Meanwhile another Italian general arrived, bringing with him a British general, Carton de Wiart, who had been captured by the Italians two years previously. When General de Wiart realised that this second mission was under the circumstances superfluous he offered to return to captivity. The Italian general allowed him, however, to return to England. On the 31st the former envoy met General Eisenhower's representative at Syracuse, announcing that his Government was prepared to accept the terms but urging that the Italians were powerless to help until the Allied forces had landed.

It was in view of these considerations that Mr Churchill sent his message to General Alexander. In order to keep the Germans, as far as possible, in ignorance of the course of events the fact that the armistice had been signed on September 3 was not disclosed until five days later, in order to synchronise with the invasion.

Mussolini had been overthrown on July 25, 1943. The preliminaries of the invasion of Italy did not commence until September 2, and the main landings on the 3rd. The advantages which might have been gained by encouraging a full revolutionary uprising were lost. An offer was made by the Allies to land an American airborne division in Rome at the time the armistice was made public, but the Germans had already made this impossible by seizing the Roman airfields. Mr Churchill in his survey given to the House of Commons on September 21 explained that the invasion could not have taken place sooner. The technical difficulty of suddenly pre-dating the organization required for an undertaking of these proportions is obviously immense. But there seems to have been a certain want of elasticity in British staff-work, an inability to make sufficiently rapid use of a situation which, even before Mussolini's fall, was known to be likely to arise. If the Allies were willing to take so big a risk as to land forces in Rome, there appears to be no reason why a naval-military attack in the north,

supplementary to the southern invasion, should not have been feasible. In any case, the fact remains that by September the Germans, far from being taken by surprise, were militarily prepared to fight every inch of the ground. When the Salerno beaches were stormed on September 9, unlike the experience in Sicily, our troops met with fierce enemy resistance and only by prodigious efforts of endurance and gallantry averted the threat of being dislodged and thrown back into the sea. Had the policy been followed of actively supporting the revolutionary outbreak which had occurred there seems to be little reason to doubt that an Allied landing, if it had taken place in August in the north, might have successfully cut off middle and southern Italy from the Germans at one blow. There was no danger of serious enemy naval attack: the Italian fleet, long before the armistice, was virtually out of action. The workers in Milan, Genoa and Turin, if supplied with arms, could have given effective support. There would, of course, have been a military risk involved in such an adventure, but it is debatable whether the risk would have been greater than the difficulties to which the invasion in the south was subjected. The advantages of the southern landings were the short sea-passage and the proximity of Sicily as a base. But with Sardinia and Corsica in Allied hands the naval problem would have been no greater than that which attended the invasion of Sicily. Moreover, a penetration across northern Italy—if it could have been undertaken during August—accompanied by an invasion on the coast nearest Sicily, would not only have found the Germans comparatively unready, but, as has been suggested, might have had the supremely valuable effect of isolating hostile forces in the south.

It seems to have been the political rather than the military risk which determined the British and American Governments against an invasion higher up on the Mediterranean shore. The extreme anti-Fascist elements in the north were suspect, insofar as they might have broken down "the whole structure and expression of the Italian State." The Allied policy, in fact, appeared to rely on the near-Fascist and even openly Fascist local authorities for the purpose of preventing disorder. This policy was consistently carried out by Amgot—an organization set up



to provide immediate administration for freed territory. Fascist mayors, who had been violently ejected by the people as the Allied armies entered towns in Sicily and southern Italy, were frequently replaced when Amgot took over. Any political demonstrations—which invariably meant, under existing conditions, anti-Fascist demonstrations—were discouraged and even prohibited. A congress of democratic parties which was summoned to meet in Naples shortly before Christmas, 1943, was at first prohibited by the Allied military authorities. The promoters of the congress were Count Sforza, leader of the 'Free Italy' Movement, and the famous Liberal philosopher, Benedetto Croce. "The authorities," stated *The Times* and *Manchester Guardian* news-service,<sup>1</sup> "have apparently acted in the belief that the Congress might provoke political agitation which in a populous centre, so near the front as Naples, might interfere with the war-effort."

The effect of invading the south, and therefore of temporarily abandoning the industrial north to German rule, was to free that part of Italy where the landowning, conservative, near-Fascist influences were predominant. Consequently, the Allies were in touch mainly with influences of a strongly monarchical and conservative character. In the north, particularly, the monarchy was discredited, inasmuch as the House of Savoy had been implicated to the hilt in the Mussolini adventure. The Allied policy was to do nothing to cause embarrassment to the Badoglio Government, and thus in effect to protect it from the strong anti-Fascist elements. On the other hand, the Allies were careful not to bestow full recognition upon it, although Italy was now accorded the status of co-belligerent. "She must be allowed to stew in her own juice awhile," Mr Churchill had said on an earlier occasion. Except for the non-activity of the Italian fleet and the seizure of the German garrisons in Sardinia—Corsica, with the aid of the Italian garrison had fallen to the Free French—no great accession of arms to the Allied cause had resulted from the Italian surrender.

General Eisenhower announced in November 1943 that the three Allied bodies which would operate in occupied territory would be the Allied 'military Government,' the

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, December 20, 1943.

Allied Control Commission—responsible for ensuring the carrying-out of the Armistice terms—and the Advisory Council for Italy, on which Russia was represented and whose duties were to recommend how Allied policy could be co-ordinated with regard to Italy and to deal with non-military affairs. At a later stage the two former bodies were fused.

The Bari conference, held on January 28, 1944, and subsequent days, condemned the Badoglio Government as unrepresentative and for sabotaging the Italian effort to participate actively in the struggle against the Nazis. It also called for the abdication of King Victor Emmanuel. The conference was composed of most of the anti-Fascist parties, ranging from Liberal to Communist, and was attended by a few delegates who managed to escape from German-occupied territory, among them being Dr Longobardi, the Socialist representative for Rome. A permanent executive committee was set up. The British reaction to the conference was cautious and not favourable. On February 22 Mr Churchill stated in the House of Commons that he could not believe an alternative Government in Italy would be helpful to the Allied war-effort. The Italian Left parties called for a ten-minutes' strike on March 4, in protest against this declaration, but the strike was cancelled on notification by the Allied military authorities that they would take all necessary measures to suppress it. Meanwhile, a diplomatic surprise was sprung by the Soviet Union, who, without consulting America or Britain, suddenly recognised the Badoglio Government. In many quarters this step was interpreted as a polite gesture of retaliation to the policy which the western Allies had pursued of 'informing' but not consulting Russia as to the Italian campaign and its political commitments. Some such intention may have affected the Soviet decision, but the main purpose was undoubtedly to encourage a stronger permeation of the Badoglio Ministry with Socialist-Communist elements. The effect of this step was immediate. The Communist and Socialist parties had set on foot a referendum of the Italian people as to the desirability of Victor Emmanuel's continued occupation of the throne. The Communists now abandoned the referendum and announced that they were prepared to shelve all constitu-

tional issues for the duration of the war. The Soviet Union subsequently modified its attitude towards the Italian Government by withholding full ambassadorial rank to her envoy.

On April 21 a new Italian Government was formed, representative of all the non-Fascist Parties. Marshal Badoglio, who had formally resigned, was reinstated as Prime Minister. The King had already announced his willingness to abdicate, when Rome was freed, and to delegate his powers to Prince Umberto. The political crisis was temporarily at an end. Italy possessed the first democratic Government which she had had for twenty-one years.

### *The campaign opens in Italy*

Whatever considerations may have weighed against an invasion in the north, the fact remains that by landing in the toe of Italy an immense military advantage was handed to the enemy. The mountainous terrain made advance by the attacking forces slow and hazardous, while offering ideal defensive positions to the German forces. Moreover, the Allies had not been able to exploit the Italian capitulation in a sudden attack on the mainland. They were only in a position to ante-date the invasion by a few days, and by this time the Germans had rushed formidable defences to the scene. Mussolini had resigned on July 25. As already mentioned, the first landings took place six weeks later.

Mention has also been made of the stiff resistance offered to the landing at Salerno on September 9. Formations of the 16th Panzer Division for several days continued to harry the Allied forces, and at times to threaten them with complete disaster. It was not until the 16th that these forces were able to pass to the offensive. On the 10th new landings were carried out at the naval base of Taranto. Brindisi was captured by these troops on the 12th.

Thereafter, in spite of magnificent engineering feats, and skill and determination on the part both of artillery and infantry, progress was inevitably slow. A set-back to the Allies was suffered on October 4, the Germans landing on the Dodecanese island of Cos, and driving off our forces by the 26th. The Allied occupation had been insufficiently

supported, and the Germans were given a much-needed advertisement of their ability to secure at least a local victory. The island of Leros was taken by the enemy on November 16. Naples was entered by the Allies on October 1. The Volturno was crossed on the 17th. The Germans towards the end of October flooded the Pontine marshes to delay the advance on Rome. On January 22, 1944, the Allies made a surprise landing in the Nettuno area, thirty miles south of Rome. The port of Anzio fell to this Fifth Army contingent on January 25, but the beach-head was held with great difficulty. German planes subjected the invading force to severe bombardment, and hopes which had been entertained that the march to Rome would be expedited proved vain. Indeed, the seizure of this beach-head may from some aspects be said to have become a liability rather than an asset. If it drew off German divisions which might have been used against the main armies in the south, it also inflicted heavy losses on the Anzio forces, and they were unable to make any advance which facilitated the campaign. It was not until the southern armies had themselves advanced to a measurable distance from Anzio that these beleaguered forces could be relieved.

In addition to the difficult country, extraordinarily bad weather helped to impede the Allied advance. The spring was abnormally wet and cold, and the Allies were forced not only to storm mountain-heights but to plough through mud, through driving rain and snow. One of the most serious hold-ups occurred at Cassino. Here the Fifth Army attacked and were counter-attacked from the middle of January 1944 until May 18. Cassino was the key-town of the formidable Gustav Line, which the Germans had built to cover Rome. The Americans of the Fifth Army were the first to pierce this line, and towards the end of January succeeded temporarily in taking Monte Cairo, two miles north of the town. The Germans fought desperately, house by house, and were not finally driven out till May 18, the day on which the heights of Monte Cassino were finally stormed.

The capture of this height was the result of one of the fiercest struggles of the war. Among the troops engaged, British and Canadian, New Zealand and Indian, the Second Polish Army Corps must be awarded special tribute.

Monte Cassino is only 1,000 feet high, but its approach is so steep that the Germans had boasted that it was impregnable. It is dominated by the famous monastery and abbey. As early as February 13 leaflets were dropped on the abbey, warning Italians that as it was being used as a fortress by the enemy it would be shelled. The Germans denied that it was being put to such use, and there appeared to be some local confirmation of this claim: but as it had become a key-point of resistance its destruction was inevitable. On one day alone, March 15, Allied planes dropped some 2,500 tons of bombs on this target. Incidentally, the havoc caused to the buildings provided the enemy with deep cover. The final assault lasted incessantly for twenty-seven hours. Sometimes tanks advanced over apparently impossible ground to support the infantry. When the Poles eventually reached the summit and ran up their national flag, the Germans retaliated with three bursts of shell-fire, perhaps as an acknowledgment that they had been ousted.

The destruction of the historic monastery-buildings could hardly fail to have its propaganda uses. The penalty of fighting in a land rich with historical and artistic treasure is, of course, that irreparable damage is done to buildings and possessions of priceless value. The invasion of Italy inevitably involved destruction of this kind, and though the Allies were scrupulously careful on the whole to refrain where possible from ruthless iconoclasm, it is the defending forces who in fact determine what is or is not to be an artillery target. Bombing tends to be less discriminate than shelling, and some complaints were made on this score as to the effects of Allied raids over the adjuncts of Rome, where enemy dumps and strong-points were located. There was much fear that the Germans would themselves wreck the capital or so defend it as to necessitate bombardment. On this occasion, however, their withdrawal was irreproachable: the city remained intact.

The fact that Rome was not entered till June 4 is some indication of the slow progress of the campaign. It had taken nine months to occupy less than half of Italy. A more rapid advance, however, was achieved during the summer. By now General Montgomery had handed over his command to General Alexander in order to superintend the preparations

for an invasion of France. Marshal Badoglio had been replaced by Bonomi. In July the Allies were in occupation of Leghorn on the west and Ancona on the Adriatic. By early August South African forces were at the gates of Florence.

On the night of August 10, 1944, the Germans withdrew to the north of the Mugnone Canal. They announced that they were doing so in order to treat Florence as an open city, in view of its art-treasures. Florence remained, however, a no-man's land, subjected to indiscriminate sniping. British forces on either side of the city made slow progress against enemy counter-attacks. All the bridges over the Arno except the Ponte Vecchio had been blown up by the Germans.

On the Adriatic wing the Poles and an Italian contingent advanced up to the Cesano river, and by August 12 the Poles had established a bridge-head on the farther shore. At the same time the Allies were directing their attention to Albania, the formation of a commando force being announced. An attempt to land on the Dalmatian island of Korcula on August 2 was unsuccessful.

By the middle of the month the Poles had taken Frontone, and supported by Italian Liberation Forces, crossed the Maggiore river. Perhaps the most immediately valuable feature of this slow and difficult advance was seen in the extended air-operations which became possible with the occupation of Italian air-fields. During August attacks were made on the oil-installations in the Bucharest and Ploesti areas and the oil-storage dumps in the Rhone valley. The submarine pens at Toulon, the oil refineries at Almas Fuzito, oil plants in Silesia, a Messerschmitt assembly plant near Budapest, and other military targets in Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania were also bombed.

Further advances were made during September, and by the end of the month the Canadians had passed beyond Rimini, while the VIIIth Army were across the Rubicon (known to-day as the Uso). At long last the Allies were within sight of the Lombardy plain, and Bologna was but twenty miles distant. But progress was still slow, and incautious official communications, such as that the Vth Army was continuing a "smashing advance beyond the Gothic line defensive zone" were roundly condemned and

protested against by newspaper correspondents attached to the Forces.

The VIIIth Army met with strong opposition from the enemy north of the Uso, five fresh German divisions being rushed up to save the Gothic line defences in this sector. Bad weather again hindered operations, but by October 8 some forces were across the river Fiumicino, now in full flood, and even holding their ground. The Vth Army were also meeting with stiff resistance north of Florence, but by the beginning of October they had advanced far enough towards Imola to cause the Germans anxiety as to their line of retreat. To the west of the Bologna road South African troops had to give way at Monte Stanco in face of heavy counter-attacks, but the Americans by October 9 had advanced to a position less than thirteen miles from Bologna.

One result of the troubles in Greece which had broken out in December 1944 was that the British were compelled to withdraw some troops from the Italian front to support their defences in Athens. The Germans at once seized the opportunity to launch a counter-attack.

### *The Resistance Movements*

Across the Adriatic the resistance movement under Marshal Tito which had begun as an underground guerilla was by now a highly efficient army, fighting in the open field. Before 1944 the Allies had supplied arms and ammunition and had landed a number of military personnel to assist in the conduct of this campaign. But the Yugoslav Partisans were winning their victory mainly by their own efforts. The enemy were compelled to divert several divisions to meet this growing threat to their occupation of the Balkans. It was no longer a threat merely of spasmodic attack on road and rail by small bands of mountaineers who could cause delay in transport movements and occasionally wreck stores and supplies. The Germans were now confronted by troops which could seize vantage points and which eventually could liberate whole areas of a territory which had once been in undisputed Nazi control.

Reference has been made from time to time to these

resistance movements. They represent perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the European war. They emerged spontaneously in each of the countries invaded by the Nazis, in France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Greece. At first confined to sheer underground organization, composed of heroic men and women who voluntarily submitted themselves to a strict discipline and hourly risked and in many cases gave their lives for the Cause, they were able, not only in Yugoslavia but in France, Italy and Greece to extend their operations on a bold military scale. The individual stories of amazing courage and resource have yet to be told in full. Where possible, directions and assistance were given them both by their own respective exiled Governments and by the Allied Command. But the ultimate victory over the common foe was mainly due to their own magnificent achievements.

The significance of these movements was not confined to the military field. It was to be found rather in their supranational and political aspects. First, as the war reached its later stages, each of the national organizations became closely associated at least with their nearer neighbours. It became possible through an intricate network of underground assistance to pass refugees and escaped prisoners from country to country, to house and feed them on their secret journey, and to lead them to their destination under the very eyes of the Gestapo and Nazi military officials. Resistance was no longer a matter of isolated national units. It had become an international movement, its unity secured by a mutual aim and by constant and intimate co-operation.

Secondly, these movements were not merely military in nature : they were inspired by a political purpose. These warriors were fighting not simply to rescue their country from the German oppressor, but to overcome their own national reactionary elements. In most cases they had issued a programme of a progressive nature. They were drawn from many sources ; Socialists, Communists, Radical Agrarians, Catholics and others were merged into a popular front, resisting not only German Fascism but the Fascism in their midst, the big landlords and financiers and industrialists who in the majority of cases had collaborated with rather than opposed the Nazi regime.



Marshal Tito's extraordinary ability both as a military commander and administrator had eventually won him full recognition from the British Government. Active assistance was given to his campaign. In June 1944, the Yugoslav Government, represented by the Yugoslav Prime Minister, signed an agreement with Marshal Tito and the National Committee of Liberation. In August Mr Churchill conferred in Italy with him. The Liberation forces were immensely strengthened by the rapid progress of the Red Army in this area. By the end of September 1944 contact between the two armies had been made west of Negotin, thus freeing the gold and copper mines in the neighbourhood from the enemy. The immediate objective was now Belgrade, which was threatened both from the north, where the Russians had crossed the Tisza on October 8, and from the south. Belgrade fell in October, and the way was now open for a full-scale attack on Hungary.

Not in all cases was the official attitude of the Allies so openly cordial, or the political character of the resistance so constructive and united as in this instance. In Poland serious developments had arisen which will be considered in a later context. Reference has already been made to the grave differences which had arisen between the rival forces in Greece. Nor can it be said that the British authorities were prepared to realise that in Spain a similar development was beginning to arise, a resistance to the Franco rule which was as much a part of the revolutionary movement as the activities of the Yugoslavs and Slovaks. Indeed, Mr Churchill went out of his way in a speech in the House of Commons to emphasise British indebtedness to General Franco's 'neutrality.'<sup>1</sup> Yet, not only had Franco proved himself to be in effect an ally and an open admirer of Hitler, but the system for which he was responsible was precisely similar to that which the resistance movements in enemy-occupied countries were attempting to overthrow. The emergence of these resistance forces was proof that the war had become a revolutionary struggle, the struggle between a new order of civilization, which the oppressed peoples were seeking to establish, and the old order which had governed Europe until 1939.

<sup>1</sup> May 24, 1944.

*Final stages of the Italian campaign*

Early in 1945 Marshal Alexander admitted in a press-interview that the Vth and VIIIth Armies could not be expected to drive the enemy from the Po Valley before the spring of that year. This was perhaps a sufficient commentary upon a campaign whose original purpose had been that of driving into South Germany. Instead, Marshal Kesselring had been able to contest every mile of the Allied advance in terrain where he was absolved from all fear of encirclement. Thousands of very gallant lives had been expended and destruction of priceless treasures had been caused by the 'hot rake,' in Mr Churchill's graphic phrase, up the length of Italy. The whole undertaking had proved a heavy debit item on the Allied balance-sheet.

The final German collapse before the Soviet forces and the American-British armies advancing from the west was inevitably reflected on the Italian front. Enemy resistance began to disintegrate and Marshal Alexander was able at last to reach his final objectives. In the latter half of April 1945, the Allied troops, having already captured Modena, crossed the Po, an achievement in itself of no mean order. Verona fell on April 26. A landing was made at Rapallo, fifteen miles east of Genoa, while the Italian partisans seized control of the major cities in the north, Milan, Turin and Venice, as well as Genoa, now being freed from the Nazi yoke. The VIIIth Army lined the Po along almost the entire front, while the enemy had fallen back to defensive positions from the Adige to a point south of Vicenza. In the closing days of that month, as on the other fronts, the Germans had ceased to be a military force. The final surrender of the enemy was completed on May 2, 1945. The campaign which had begun one year and eight months earlier was at an end.

## CHAPTER 11

### THE SOVIET MAJOR OFFENSIVE

#### *Soviet summer campaign, 1943*

WHEN the Germans opened their summer offensive at Kursk in June 1943, they employed fifteen armoured divisions as a battering-ram, the aim being to make a breach in the Soviet front at a critical point and eventually to threaten Moscow. For some ten days the fate of the battle was uncertain. On July 24 Marshal Stalin announced in an Order of the Day that the enemy offensive had been finally defeated.

This was a historic moment, for it meant nothing less than the end of all German hopes of the conquest of Russia. From that date onwards the initiative passed entirely to the Red Army. The Germans began at once to fall back on the Dnieper. Their retreat was carried out in a comparatively orderly manner. But the Russians were now the attacking force, and, moreover, they were to prove themselves in advance even more efficient than in defence. Most military observers considered it impossible that any rapid victory could be pressed through devastated country, with all the problems of reorganising bases for supply, so as to renew the offensive across the Dnieper before the advent of the bleak eastern winter. But the Russians achieved the impossible.

There had been a German legend that the Russians were incapable of undertaking a summer offensive. Events were rapidly to disclose the falsity of this assumption. No sooner had the German offensive been halted than the battle blazed up on the Orel sector. Attacks were launched to the north-east and south-west of this important town. Simultaneously, a fresh assault was commenced on the Mius River, on the north of the Sea of Azov, as also in the Donetsk and the Kuban sectors. The battle-line was thus suddenly extended to a length of no less than 500 miles. Orel and Byelgorod were captured on August 5, the latter by troops from the Steppes and the Voronezh front. On the Orel

sector the advance was so rapid that Karachev was occupied by the Soviet forces on the 15th. Karachev was the last formidable enemy outpost guarding Bryansk, which was now less than twenty-eight miles distant.

To the south the Germans put up desperate efforts to stop the Red Army advance towards Poltava, so as to preserve a corridor in this area for supplies or escape. Tanks and armoured trains were rushed up, while a large number of additional Nazi planes were thrown into the struggle. The Germans were fully aware of the serious threat to Kharkov now developing. But though they delayed the Red Army progress they could no longer halt it.

The immensity of the Soviet offensive now revealed itself. In this same week of August yet another offensive was undertaken, opened up from the north-west and south-east of Spasdemensk. Here the advance was dramatically rapid and the city of Kharkov was entered by the Russians on August 23. This was in itself a major German defeat. But it was one of the outstanding features of this campaign that the Soviet strategy allowed no rest to the enemy. Objectives gained were made the bases, in an incredibly short space of time, for further advance. The Red Army pressed home the advantages of their victory without a day's delay. Attacks on the retreating enemy were immediately launched from the south, south-west and west of the city. By September 23 Poltava itself had fallen into Russian hands.

Meanwhile, the offensive in the Donetz was gaining momentum. From south of Izyum and south-west of Voroshilovgrad an advance of twenty-two miles had been accomplished. By August 30 Taganrog on the Azov coast was taken, a significant victory since it opened up new possibilities for Soviet naval activity on the Black Sea and might ultimately develop a threat to the enemy-occupation of the Crimea.

By the first week of September the Red Army had advanced forty miles beyond Stalino and was striking towards Dnepropetrovsk and the Azov coast. The Donetz Basin was now entirely wrested from the enemy. On September 25 Smolensk, the greatest German base in the whole of Russia, was captured. Even more sensational

were the developments taking place on the Dnieper. The four Ukrainian army-groups which had been closing in on the river-bend, crossed it and threw out bridgeheads at Kremenchug and towards Kiev.

The enemy had concentrated at Krivoi Rog. The Red Army, with superhuman efforts, encircled Kiev and drove out the Kiev bulge westwards as far as Zhitomir. The Leningrad-Odessa railway was cut, thus severing the German communications between north and south across the Pripet Marshes. General Manstein, in command of the enemy-forces, realised the acute danger. From Krivoi Rog he switched his reserves against the south-west face of the Kiev bulge. He made one last desperate attempt to challenge the Soviet threat. If successful, he might have been able to recapture Kiev and establish a line for the winter. He was met by a new Soviet offensive, midway between Gomel and Mogilev, clearly indicating that the Russians had no reason to fear the German attack. This confidence was justified.

#### *The winter campaign, 1943-4*

By the first week in October 1943, the Germans had been cleared completely out of the Kuban, and the Russians thus regained the whole of the Caucasus. 20,000 Germans were killed in the final battle and 3,000 taken prisoner. In the same week (October 7) the Dnieper was crossed in three places, and on the same day the Soviet offensive flared up much farther to the north: Nevel was captured. By the beginning of November all possibilities of the escape of the German forces in the Crimea were at an end. But worse disasters were to fall them. Their hold on Kiev was becoming daily more precarious, and on November 6 this great and ancient city fell to the Russians.

The Germans were now facing disaster on a colossal scale. At no point on the vast eastern front were they capable of holding the Soviet forces. It is true that on November 19 the Red Army which had captured Zhitomir—itsself some eighty miles due west of Kiev—six days earlier, temporarily evacuated it: but this was a tactical move and the one solitary instance in this period of a Soviet

withdrawal. Korosten to the north-west of Kiev was entered on November 18, and on the 26th Gomel was taken as the result of a bold bye-passing manoeuvre. Zhitomir was captured on the last day of the year.

The mere recital of the list of towns captured, the number of German tanks and equipment taken or destroyed in successive engagements, the totals of enemy captured and killed, convey little idea of the magnitude of the Soviet achievement. Stalin's Orders of the Day and the salute of the guns in Moscow were a perpetual reminder of how entirely the war in the east had turned against the Germans; but in retrospect it is wiser to survey the picture as a whole. By the end of November, that is in less than 150 days after the collapse of the enemy-offensive, the Russians had advanced more than 300 miles westward over devastated country. By January 1944, Novgorod had been recaptured (January 20), Lyuban taken (January 28), and the Leningrad-Moscow trunk-line completely cleansed of the Germans. By February 2 the Red Army had reached the Estonian frontier. On the following day ten German divisions were surrounded in the Dnieper bend. Nikopol fell on February 8, Luga on the 13th. The pivot-point of Krivoi Rog was seized on the 22nd. By the end of February the front ran much as follows: the Russians were close to the Black Sea on the northern strip of the Crimea, then from Krivoi Rog the line extended in a great salient westwards through Rovno and close to Pinsk on the Polish border; the line here turned back, eastwards to Zhlobin, through Vitebsk to Pskov, then in a straight northerly direction to Narva on the Latvian and Estonian frontiers.

One result of this massive thrust against the enemy front was finally to destroy the threat to Leningrad. The main objective of the original German drive in the north had been to capture that city, and as part of the miscalculation as to the effectiveness of the Soviet forces the Germans calculated that it would be a comparatively easy prize. That they did not succeed in entering the city is due not only to the desperate determination of the Red Army but to the invincible courage of the civilians. It was not only the bombardment and imminent enemy-invasion which threatened them: they endured the privations of siege, an extreme shortage of food owing to the fact that they were

practically surrounded and could rely only on Lake Ladoga as their line of communication with the rest of the Soviet Union. In the long nights of the northern winter they suffered, through want of fuel, the bitter arctic cold. The opera players in the first winter of the siege had to play in fur coats: in their proper costume they would have been frozen. These conditions, as has already been recorded, were considerably relieved when the Russians were able to effect a break-through at Schlusseburg in February 1943.

It is the glory of Leningrad not only that the morale of its citizens was undaunted, but that it was the troops on their own sector which eventually undertook the offensive and flung back the enemy. On January 14, 1944, ships and icebreakers of the Baltic fleet broke through to the fortress of Oranienbaum, carrying tanks, guns and ammunition. This daring expedition was accomplished under the very eyes of the German batteries at Peterhof. An immense barrage was opened up by the Leningrad defences and the offensive started. The city, far from having been starved into surrender, overcame its attackers. By February the whole Leningrad province had been cleared of the invader. 75,000 German corpses lay on the soil of that threshold which the Nazis had never succeeded in passing.

### *The German retreat from Soviet soil*

Even before the spring of 1944 it was evident that the German armies were no longer capable of holding the Soviet advance. In local sectors they could still launch counter-attacks and delay the general progress of this titanic offensive. But they could offer no permanent resistance. On the whole of the eastern Front they were being pushed back with enormous losses and without hope of stemming the tide. By the summer the German retreat in not a few cases became a rout. The whole enemy resistance appeared to be disintegrating rapidly, and the main problem was not so much a question of whether the Red Army could break through the Nazi defences, but how quickly supplies could be brought up to enable the Russians to press forward their latest victories.

Nikolaiev had been captured by the Soviet forces on March 28, 1944, and by the end of the month they had reached the Pruth at Cernauti and taken Kolomyja, on the railway which crosses the Carpathians into Ruthenia. At the same time they reached Hotyn and Chelmenti on the Upper Dniester. Armyansk and Kerch fell by the middle of April to the IVth Ukrainian and the Independent Maritime Armies.

By May 7 the final attack on Sevastopol was launched and a break-through of the chief German positions effected. Sevastopol was taken two days later, the immediate consequences of which were increased Russian naval activities in the Black Sea: over a hundred German and Rumanian vessels were sunk there in the month ending May 10. The Germans fought fiercely in the whole of this area, and the Luftwaffe claimed to have destroyed 604 Russian aircraft, 196 tanks and 113 guns between April 8 and May 12.

In June a Soviet offensive was launched in the Finnish sector. On June 10, after three hours' heavy shelling, and with the support of over a thousand aircraft, the Russians broke through the first line of defences in the Karelian Isthmus, capturing Yatkina and Terijoki. In two days they were less than thirty miles from the Mannerheim Line, which marked the third defensive enemy zone in this area. The Russian Baltic Fleet assisted in this operation. By June 20 the Russians had captured Viipuri. A new offensive north of Lake Onega commenced immediately. The Finns fell back hurriedly and abandoned Tali on the following day. The Soviet advance between Lakes Onega and Ladoga reached the Murmansk railway, and occupied Petrozavodsk, the capital of the Karelian Republic on the 28th.

The Soviet forces were now striking all along the Front, and the enemy was given no respite. On June 23 a new attack was opened north and south of Vitebsk, towards the Polish frontier. By the end of the month the Germans were left with only one railway out of this important sector. To the north-west the Red Army crossed the river Dvina on a front of twenty miles, and south-west both the railway and the Vitebsk-Lepel road were cut. This advance was now being made on a front some fifty miles wide, and on June 26 Vitebsk fell. Five enemy divisions were surrounded, 20,000



Germans killed and 10,000 captured. Lepel was seized on June 28 and Polotsk on July 2. Bobruisk fell on June 29. The Soviet armies were closing in on Minsk from the north-east, south-east and east. The supreme achievement of this operation was completed on July 3, 1944. On that day Minsk itself was taken.

The summer offensive had now reached a bewildering tempo. During July the Russians swept forward with a strength and speed which overwhelmed any attempts at enemy resistance. By the middle of the month the Pripet had been crossed, and Pinsk taken (July 14). Grodno fell two days later. By the 17th the Russians had reached the Latvian border, and approaching the Insternburg gap with open country and railway to Königsberg in East Prussia lying before them. Brody and Krasnoye were taken on July 18, the western Bug crossed north and south of Sokal, and on the following day Russian units had struck into Latvia. Kholm and Pskov fell by the 23rd, Lublin was taken the following day. Some idea of the speed of the advance may be gathered from the fact that the Soviet forces between the Bug and the Vistula covered seventy-five miles in five days. Narva, Dvinsk and Shavli—the junction controlling all the Lithuanian railways and main roads—were in Russian hands by the 27th. Lvov fell on the 27th, with 3,500 of the garrison prisoners and 8,000 killed. Brest-Litovsk was captured on the 28th.

Between June 23 and August 3 the Red Army had liberated more than 100,000 square miles of invaded territory. Indeed, the supreme achievement of the 1944 summer offensive was that the enemy had been driven almost completely from Soviet soil. In these three years of fighting the German killed and prisoners amounted, on Moscow calculations, to 7,800,000: the Soviet Union admitted the loss of 5,300,000. 70,000 enemy tanks, 60,000 aircraft and 90,000 guns had been destroyed or captured against corresponding losses of 49,000 tanks, 30,128 aircraft and 48,000 guns. Statistics do not usually stir the imagination, but these figures may give some conception of the colossal nature of this offensive.

The Nazi defeat was to be reckoned, however, not merely in the sacrifice of men and material. Their whole military position in the east was threatened. Mid-August saw the

Russians at the gates of Warsaw, threatening both East Prussia and the German forces virtually isolated in Estonia and Latvia. In the south the Rumanian frontier had been crossed, one army holding Baimaclia and the other at Vaslui, fifty miles away. On August 10 the Soviet forces had begun to advance through the Carpathian pass leading to Munkacevo in Carpathian Ruthenia.

One of the most significant symptoms of the decay of German strength was seen in the lack of strategy and the apparent confusion in the minds of many of the Army commanders. The Nazi forces in Estonia and Latvia were clearly being encircled by the advance into Poland and Lithuania. But these forces made no attempt to withdraw until too late. More than twenty German commanders allowed themselves to be captured by the Russians in this way. This lack of strategic wisdom may have been due to the amateur military orders of Hitler and the Nazi Party. It is more likely to have been due to disgust on the part of the Generals with the whole of the tactics pursued by Hitler in the Russian campaign, and a refusal to take any further share in the responsibility for defeat.

### *The Warsaw tragedy, 1944*

The dramatic sweep of the Soviet forces westwards led many a journalist and others in Britain and America to predict an invasion of Germany proper even by the early autumn. These predictions, however, were not to be fulfilled. By late August there was a lull on the very sectors where further progress would have led to the more sensational results. Partly this was due to the fact that the Red Army, having advanced so rapidly, needed to consolidate its position and to await supplies; the different gauge of the Russian railways had some share in the delay. Partly it was due to stiffening German resistance, both in East Prussia and before Warsaw. In the latter case the Soviet forces sustained a serious local defeat and were compelled to fall back. Warsaw, which had seemed to be a prize almost within their grasp, remained for many more weeks in Nazi hands.

This failure led to unfortunate consequences, both from a military and political aspect. Believing that the city was about to be liberated, the Polish Government in London gave orders to General Sosnkowski to rally the Polish forces within and around Warsaw on August 1. There can be little doubt that the Polish Government, animated by strong anti-Russian sentiment, desired to see Warsaw liberated by Polish efforts, independently of direct Red Army assistance. On the other hand, in anti-Soviet quarters it was said that the Soviet radio simultaneously exhorted the Polish partisans to revolt. The official answer given to this charge was that the Soviet message was merely part of a 'routine propaganda' advising the Poles to harry the Nazi forces, as was being done by other resistance movements continuously. In any case the effect was tragic. Taken in conjunction with Sosnkowski's special order, the Polish patriots assumed that the hour of deliverance, and therefore the moment for decisive revolt, had come. Instead, the Germans rushed up reserves and with superior strength surrounded the Polish strongpoints, subjecting them to devastating bombardment. Thousands of Polish lives were sacrificed. The Polish heroes of this struggle held out, and General Sosnkowski allowed himself to deliver in an Order of the Day a thinly-veiled criticism, couched in bitter terms, of both the Soviet Union and the other Allies. The Vatican press suggested that the Red Army had deliberately postponed its entry so as to cause a Polish disaster. *Pravda* replied to these charges by stating that the Red Army was doing all that was humanly possible to capture Warsaw. "It has been the Red Army's experience," the article continued, "that relatively unarmed popular movements, fighting in areas where the enemy is heavily concentrated, are bound to fail in the face of strong forces armed with modern weapons. From the start the Warsaw venture was destined to miscarry, with useless sacrifice of life."

This premature rising was deplorable not only on account of the sacrifice of 200,000 gallant lives, the destruction of more than a third of the city, and the desperate straits to which the beleaguered garrisons were subjected, but also as a further indication of the deep-seated antagonism between the authorities of Poland and the Soviet Union.

Not only the many feudal military reactionary elements in the Polish Government, but also several of the Socialist, peasant and progressive forces, continued to claim as their rights territory east of the Curzon line. Polish propaganda issued from Britain was coloured persistently with a bitter anti-Russian tone, and asserted that ill-treatment and deportations had been inflicted in 1939 not only on the Polish ruling-class but on the workers brought under the Soviet regime. The Soviet Union responded by refusing to recognise the Polish *émigré* Government and by setting up a Union of Polish Patriots in Moscow. There had been some hope earlier in the year that the visit of Polish delegates to Moscow had healed the breach. M. Mikolajczyk, the Polish premier, continued to make strenuous efforts to improve Polish-Soviet relations, to meet as far as possible the desires of the Allies regarding a new and more democratic Polish constitution, and to draw up a programme of which Moscow could approve. He further announced that General Sosnkowski's Order of the Day had been issued without the authority of the Government and in order to embarrass it. The anti-Soviet and reactionary influences were represented by the President, who, even when he was forced to consider the dismissal of Sosnkowski decided to replace him by the appointment of an equally anti-Russian figure, General Bor. The Warsaw tragedy did not help to improve this situation. Moscow at first even refused the use of Soviet airfields to the British and American pilots who were forced to fly from Italy and back to bring food and supplies to the Polish garrisons in the city. Ostensibly this refusal was justified on the ground that the Poles were in possession only of isolated buildings, and that the supplies would fall therefore largely into enemy hands. Later, however, in September, Soviet planes participated in these acts of mercy. The Commander of the Home Army, known by the pseudonym of 'General Bor,' entered into consultation with the Red Army Command, the Polish Committee set up in Lublin showed a willingness to co-operate more fully with the Government in London, and the position appeared temporarily to have improved.

The succession of Soviet victories and the clear evidence which they afforded that Germany had lost the war had their inevitable effect on the satellite States of the Axis.

The Red Army had crossed through the Galatz Gap and reached Buzau before the end of August, occupying one of the Rumanian oil districts at Ploesti. On August 23 King Michael issued a proclamation stating that the dictatorship was abolished and that Rumania had agreed to an armistice with the Soviet Union, America and Britain. A new Government was formed under General Senatescu. The Soviet Union reaffirmed that Rumania's territorial integrity would be respected and that there would be no interference with her internal affairs. Rumanian troops would be allowed to retain their arms in order to fight against the German invaders. The Red Army would be compelled to continue fighting on Rumanian soil until the Germans had been driven out.

Bulgaria had never been at war with Russia, but, in view of the fact that the Sofia Government had merely announced that it would pursue a policy of neutrality and was interpreting this policy by continuing to aid the German forces in the Balkans and facilitating their retreat, Moscow declared war on September 5. By midnight Bulgaria had declared war on Germany, and on September 9 an armistice with Russia was signed by a new Bulgarian Government. This Soviet-Bulgarian rupture must surely rank as the shortest war in history.

The Soviet victories had their repercussions also on Finland. In spite of strong representations from both America and Britain, Finland had obstinately refused to abandon her support of Germany. But by September 1944, she was compelled to face the realities. An armistice with Moscow was signed, the terms of which were, in view of her persistent hostility, perhaps less severe than might have been expected. Finland was compelled to yield Petsamo and the Karelian Isthmus, to allow the Allies the use of new airfields and her merchant navy, and to pay an indemnity of three hundred million dollars over a period of six years. The latter condition was open to criticism on the score of the future economic condition of the country. It meant that for about two years Finnish export values would have to go in reparations and would insure a consequent inability during that period to pay for imports which she would desperately need.

The Red Army advance, having been halted before

Warsaw, was diverted to the south and the north. With Rumanian and Bulgarian territory freed the Soviet forces were able to link up with Marshal Tito's army, and by the end of September were in sight of the open Hungarian plains. It began to look as though Vienna rather than Berlin would be their next objective. In the north the Russians, in spite of strong resistance, had cleared the whole of Estonia and were closing in on Riga.

The military picture of eastern Europe during the closing weeks of 1944 is that of a number of seemingly disconnected campaigns, in all of which the Germans were meeting with losses which increasingly taxed their strength and compelled them to loosen their grip mile by mile over the vast territory which they had captured. North Transylvania had been virtually cleared of the enemy by October 25. On the 29th Soviet forces had crossed into Slovakia from Ruthenia. In Hungary the Red Army was advancing both from the north-east and the south, and by November 3 was within fifteen miles of Budapest at Bugyi. In the same week Tito's forces were in control of the whole of the Serbo-Greek frontier. The port of Split was captured by Tito on October 27, and the Russians were in possession of many key-positions north-west of Belgrade. On November 6 Monastir fell.

Meanwhile, the enemy were being driven out of Greece. They evacuated Salonika by the end of October, having first wrecked the harbour. The whole of Crete was freed by December 1, except for pockets at Suda Bay, Canea and the Maleme airbase. All Macedonia was liberated by November 23 and the naval base at Kotor Bay was captured. In the extreme north the Russians had driven the enemy out of the northern portions of Finnish Lapland by the end of November, and were now in full possession of Estonia.

The Bulgarian army had reinforced the Soviet and Tito attacks in Yugoslavia, its task being mainly that of striking at the flank of the Germans as they retreated up the valley of the Ibar. Three German divisions north of the Albanian frontier were desperately attempting to join up with forces farther north, while eighteen divisions were located in Bosnia. Tito captured Draganic on December 23 and was now in control of a long stretch of the railway near Doboj. In the closing days of the year the one road on

which the German forces retiring from Greece could rely was reported to be cut.

It was in Hungary, however, that the fiercest fighting took place during this period. The Germans were evidently determined to hold on desperately to Buda. Fighting was taking place by the end of December in the streets, and the civilian population, swollen to the number of some two million, was facing slow starvation, the city being without electricity or water. On December 30 two Soviet envoys, who under the white flag had entered the garrison to demand surrender, were reported to have been shot by the Germans as they drove away, but this outrage the Germans subsequently denied. On January 2 the Germans launched a violent attack with strong forces of tanks from the Komarno area in an attempt to retrieve the situation. This attack made some progress, at the cost of eighty-eight tanks, but on January 13 the German attempt to reach Budapest was abandoned. By February 12 all resistance had ceased, and on the following day its capitulation was formally announced. The Hungarians already, under the terms of the armistice which Moscow had ignored, were actively fighting against the Germans and the value of their assistance improved as the campaign was carried into the heart of the country.

### *Probable Soviet attitude in the post-war world*

The differences which had arisen over the Polish settlement between the British-American and the Soviet Governments, differences which were accentuated by the time that the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations had assembled on April 25, 1945, were an indication that agreement between the Great Powers was far from complete. In the Anglo-Saxon mind there was a grave uncertainty as to what would be the effect of Soviet influence in the post-war world: Stalin seemed to be a modern sphinx. Russian intentions were obviously a crucial issue, since Soviet influence could not be other than an immense factor in the shaping of world-resettlement. Four different attitudes towards the U.S.S.R. had by now become distinguishable. The Communist standpoint was perfectionist, inasmuch as it assumed that Soviet policy itself set the standard of right and wrong and was accordingly

beyond criticism. Another extreme standpoint was taken up in Trotskyist and near-Trotskyist circles: here the Soviet Union was indicted as guilty of a gross betrayal of socialism, and this school of thought was prepared to condemn every Moscow decision as an expression of that betrayal. Thirdly, there were the reactionaries who had always hated the Bolshevik Revolution and were once more venturing into the open over the Polish dispute, in defence of the feudal landlords and of other vested interests in Europe. Finally, we can identify moderate Conservative opinion as believing that Russia had shed her earlier idealisms and was becoming nationalist, reverting indeed to an acceptance of the principles of the traditional civilization which the Revolution was supposed to have overthrown. This Conservative approval of modern Soviet development was tempered by the fear that Russian nationalism might become imperialistic and thus prove eventually to be an awkward challenge to British-American schemes of commercial expansion.

In attempting to arrive at a true and unbiased conclusion as to the U.S.S.R. it is always well to remember that absolute right and wrong are rarely, if ever, the property of any one cause. Extreme theories, whether perfectionist or condemnatory, can therefore be dismissed as almost certainly false, while containing partial truth. Various tendencies are observable in the Soviet Union, all of which have to be taken into account before any accurate judgment can be formed. In the first place, there is no sign whatever that the U.S.S.R. is likely to abandon its socialist economic system. On the contrary, the Soviet peoples are more than ever convinced that production for public use, as contrasted with the private-profit motive, is an order which is at all costs worth preserving. Precisely because the Soviet Union believes its system is of value it is determined to safeguard itself as far as possible from future attack. This has resulted in a policy of insuring that in the States which adjoin Soviet territory only such Governments are established as can be relied upon to remain loyal to Soviet aims. From Finland and the Baltic, in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Bulgaria, Moscow control was seen to be directed to this end. In the process of liberation and resettlement territories in the Red Army zones virtually



became closed areas. Allied diplomats and pressmen found that they were invariably barred from entering the scenes of action, generally on the polite excuse that no accommodation was available for such visitors except at a convenient distance. This method of exclusion was markedly different from the British attitude in Greece, where, even at the height of the 1944 troubles, presently to be recorded, Soviet observers were permitted freely to travel and conduct their own investigations.

It may fairly be argued that the Soviet policy was in effect to create a 'sphere of influence' in the orthodox imperialist manner. But, however greatly this may be regretted, it must not be supposed that Russia was animated by any desire to acquire an expansion of territory for economic profit. The Soviet policy was due solely to the fear which Moscow had consistently entertained as to the future intentions of the outside world. These fears had been amply confirmed by the bitter experience of the last few years: Finland, for example, had been used as a base for enemy operations. The Western Allies might be friendly to-day, but to-morrow an aggressive Poland or Rumania might be backed by America or some other combination of hostile Powers. The Soviet Union was taking no chances, and a barrier of pro-Soviet States seemed to her to be the most effectual precaution.

A further tendency in Soviet policy can be traced as a consequence of the need for purchasing heavy goods from abroad, particularly from America and Britain, so as to fulfil the task of restoring Soviet devastated areas. After four years of war the U.S.S.R. could not ask its peoples once again to endure the sacrifices which had been entailed in the Five Year Plans. Moscow was therefore determined not to endanger trade-relations by antagonising the American or British Governments through the encouragement of any anti-capitalist campaign. This attitude was reflected in the unauthorised decision of the American Communist leader to co-operate with American capitalist forces and thereby to abandon, at least for the immediate future, basic principles. If the Soviet order was truly of value, then, Moscow contended, the recovery of that order must be the prime necessity, overriding any international obligations. In other words the Stalinist policy of (re-)building Socialism

in one country was destined more than ever to prevail over the Trotskyist appeal for world-revolution.

When a nation has had to fight desperately for its existence and has subsequently won a superb victory, its sense of patriotism is inevitably stimulated. In Russia this atmosphere of emotional enthusiasm could hardly fail to give an enhanced prestige to the status of the Red Army generals. If these heroes were to return home only to find that they were expected more or less to sink into obscurity, under conditions of peace, they might well prove an embarrassment to the political Government. The Communist Party would be far too alert to ignore this danger, and might be expected to make room for these popular figures in the political order. Some observers indeed prophesied that this would lead to a more militarist trend in Soviet administration, and even to a napoleonic phase, such as followed the French Revolution. It is improbable, however, that the Communist Party would allow itself to be overshadowed by anything in the nature of a military dictatorship.

The suppression of the Comintern, the substitution of a national anthem for the Internationale, the increased liberty given to the Orthodox Church, were other symptoms which were regarded as significant, insofar as they suggested that the U.S.S.R. was already drifting away from its virgin revolutionary ideals to a more traditional outlook. For this Russia was applauded by the Conservatives and denounced by the near-Trotskyists. The tendencies already mentioned account for some of these developments. In regard to the Russian Church we can detect a trend which usually appears when a revolutionary Government begins to feel a sense of security; it can afford to adopt a more liberal attitude towards its minorities. This trend had found expression in the 1936 Constitution. We have also to take into consideration the extraordinary educational progress which had been achieved in the U.S.S.R. since 1917. The Soviet peoples were now far more politically mature than in the earlier phases of the revolution. This is a factor which will probably produce a more democratic spirit in the political field than has hitherto been evident, though it is unlikely to take the same form of political democracy as has evolved in the West.

In many quarters strong criticism was levied against the Soviet Union in respect to the treatment of reactionary, and even of Socialist, Poles. Some of these stories emanated from such propaganda-sources as to be highly suspect, but some no doubt were accurate. There is nothing surprising about them, nor do they denote any new feature of Soviet administration. The Russian way has always been ruthlessly disciplinarian. Not a few Soviet citizens have been accused of sabotage, and liquidated, merely for their inefficiency in carrying out the executive responsibilities with which they had been interested. It was only to be expected, therefore, that inasmuch as Moscow, rightly or wrongly, believed the Polish attitude, whether Socialist or reactionary, to be inherently anti-Soviet that measures should have been taken in Poland which were entirely alien to British conceptions of justice. Yet it must be remembered that the Soviet Union has had good reason for its deep-seated suspicions. It would be utopian to imagine that these suspicions can be suddenly removed. Even if a Socialist Commonwealth were to be set up in Europe, Russia would be unlikely to view that Commonwealth with such confidence that she would feel able immediately to disentangle herself from power-politics. Only after a long experience that foreign Socialist forces tend to guarantee and not to threaten Soviet security will the cure be found. And in this respect it should not be forgotten that the bitter denunciations against the U.S.S.R. which have emanated from some Socialist quarters, even though they may be the outcome of genuine moral indignation, can certainly be calculated to confirm Soviet doubts as to the friendliness and reliability of the Left. Russians are peculiarly sensitive to foreign opinion. And, though the U.S.S.R. is far from impeccable, for many of its faults Britain and the rest of the world have been largely responsible.

### *Soviet invasion of enemy territory*

The halt of the Soviet forces along the Polish and East Prussian frontiers seemed to be prolonged for a disappointingly extended period, and there were whispers that the delay was due to political rather than military considerations.

The summer advance, however, had carried the Red Army so far westward that the work of repairing roads, railways and bridges and the bringing-up of equipment was bound to take a long time. The Russians were determined not to strike until they were in every respect ready to carry the battle into the heart of the Reich.

The penultimate offensive opened on January 14, 1945, with a sudden break-through of Marshal Zhukov's 1st White Russian Army on a seventy-five mile front in central Poland. This was the first move in an operation on a more prodigious scale and at a speed more rapid than any previous record in military history can equal. Moreover, it was carried out with superb strategical skill. The attacks on all the different fronts were seen to fit in to a perfect whole. No risks were taken of the enemy outflanking any of the advancing armies. No opportunity was given to enable the enemy to concentrate his forces against any one major thrust. As had become the accepted technique in this modern warfare, fortified positions were by-passed and left far behind as isolated islands in the newly acquired Soviet territory.

Zhukov had moved on January 14. On the 17th he had taken Grodzisk, eighteen miles south-west of Warsaw, crossed the Vistula north of the city, and entered the capital. The five-and-a-half years' ordeal was lifted at last.

Meanwhile, Marshal Koniev's 1st Ukrainian Army was on the march towards Czestochowa and Cracow, while Rokossovsky's 2nd White Russian Army had joined up its two bridgeheads over the Narew and advanced twenty-five miles in four days. This immense break-through led to immediate and sensational progress. Czestochowa was captured on the 16th, Lodz and Cracow on the 18th. Nor were these the only offensives. New attacks were launched on January 18 in East Prussia by General Cherniakovsky's 3rd Ukrainian Army, on a fifty mile front. This campaign very swiftly overthrew the enemy defences. By the end of the month East Prussia was isolated from Germany, except by sea, and the Russians were in possession of all but a 600 square-mile pocket. Königsberg became a lone fortress, very nearly cut off even from this remaining German area. On February 3 Cherniakovsky entered Landsberg and Bartenstein, and began to clear the

Samland peninsula. Elbing was occupied on the 9th, and twenty German divisions along the coast were now fast held in a trap. Landau was captured the following day.

So incredibly swift had been Zhukov's advance that by the end of January his forces had reached positions thirty miles inside Germany proper. By February 12 Zhukov's troops were not more than fifteen miles from the key-point of Stettin, and had reached Zehden, thirty-five miles from Berlin. Koniev's forces had crossed the Oder south-east of Breslau. On February 11 the Oder was also crossed north-west of Breslau, and farther up the river an advance of thirty-five miles on a 100 mile front succeeded in cutting the main line to the capital. A few days earlier the German radio had announced that the Oder front was "the bolt and barrier position which is going to halt the Russians." But already, save in the northern and central sectors, the Oder was crossed. The Nazis were now facing a situation not far removed from catastrophe. They had lost immense quantities of men, divisions with their staffs were abandoned miles behind the Soviet lines. Silesia, the great war-production arsenal, was already largely in Russian hands. All the confusion caused by the flight of refugees, the experience which the Germans had inflicted in their own swift invasions, taxed their administration to the utmost. Berlin was choked with a ceaseless stream of civilians fleeing westwards, and, together with other German centres, was visited daily by American and British bombers on an unprecedented scale. In the three days ending February 15 thirteen thousand aircraft had dropped 14,000 tons.

The German command may have hoped that the lure of Berlin, now that Zhukov was so comparatively near, would tempt the Russians to concentrate a frontal attack on the capital, in which case the thrust might lend itself to a dangerous counter-attack at some vital point elsewhere. The Vth and VIth Panzer divisions were, indeed, withdrawn from the west for this purpose. But the Russians were taking no risks. Each sector of the vast front was well covered. Not only had the Soviet drive reduced the East Prussia forces to impotence, but one offensive was directed towards Danzig and was already less than sixty miles distant from that objective. Another wing was advancing from the south-east towards Stettin. There was the main

threat from Landsberg, north of Frankfurt, and four other wedges south of the Berlin front towards Cottbus, Kohlfurt and Görlitz-Dresden. The flank of their advance was protected by the advance along the Czechoslovakian frontier from Cracow towards Neisse. There was no favourable point at which an enemy counter-attack could strike. The actual threat to Berlin appeared to be developing not only from Zhukov but from Marshal Koniev's drive from the south-east.

The wisdom of the Soviet military strategy in rejecting the temptation to achieve immediate sensational results was peculiarly justified in view of the German dispersal of strength in Eastern Europe. An extraordinary feature of German military strategy had been the failure to withdraw the many outlying forces in time so as to concentrate on an effective resistance before the inner Reich. But this undoubted misjudgment had certain minor advantages from the enemy standpoint, insofar as at any moment the Soviet advance might be threatened from the flanks or rear. The Soviet campaigns against the remaining pockets were therefore vigorously pursued. On the Baltic coast it was not until March 28, 1945, that Gdynia was taken, Danzig itself falling on the 30th. East Prussia had been cut off, except by sea, as early as the end of January. Memel was captured and the whole of Lithuania freed by the beginning of February. The German circle was reduced to a few square miles and attacked from three sides. Königsberg surrendered on the evening of April 9. Griefenhagen, south of Stettin, was taken on March 16, and on the 17th the Altdamm-Berlin road was cut. Between Breslau and the Carpathians three Soviet columns were operating, one towards Ostrava, one in the Ratibor area, and the third from the direction of Oppeln. In Hungary enemy resistance was fiercest. It was not until the middle of March that Marshal Tolbukhin was able to launch an offensive towards the Austrian frontier into the Bakony Forest. Malinovsky's II<sup>nd</sup> Ukrainian Army succeeded in capturing a chain of towns south and east of Komarno. Severe fighting was also taking place in Yugoslavia and Bosnia.

Tolbukhin made such rapid progress that on April 4 he had taken Baden and on the 6th was at the gates of Vienna, aided considerably in the last three days of the

onslaught by Allied aircraft operating from Italy. Farther afield, it was announced on April 9 that the R.A.F. had established a base at the eastern end of Crete and that supplies were being carried to the partisans who were actively attacking enemy defences. 10,000 Germans were still holding out in the western portion of the island.

One of the most satisfactory results of the discussions which had taken place between the Allied Leaders at the Crimea Conference was the setting-up of a closer Allied military co-operation than had previously been attempted. The results of this were at once evident. In the final assault the time-table on the eastern and western fronts were admirably co-ordinated. The Soviet forces in Silesia along the Oder and from the south were standing ready for the crucial moment. Nothing probably contributed to the German collapse more than this factor. In addition, the Soviet drive along the Danube and into Czechoslovakia was an anticipation of the alleged Nazi intention to retire into a highly fortified mountain stronghold where, it was hoped, an enemy centre might be indefinitely maintained, communicating with and stimulating underground sabotage against the Allies throughout Germany. It was therefore essential to Allied plans to press forward in this area and prevent the construction of any such concentrated citadel.

Presently we shall tell the story of the British-American advance in the West, and the final victory. It has been necessary, however, in order to appreciate that achievement to recognise the extent of the Soviet offensive. We have to picture these widely scattered campaigns, often in difficult country, under various climatic conditions, and each of them essential for the mopping-up of the crumbling enemy strength and the liberation of south-eastern and mid-European peoples from their long vigil of captivity and privation.

## CHAPTER 12

### PROGRESS IN THE FAR EAST

#### *American naval attacks on Japanese*

THE decision taken by President Roosevelt and Mr Churchill, soon after the entry of Japan into the war, that the defeat of Germany must be the first objective of the Allies, and that, until that was achieved, the campaign in the Pacific must remain a secondary consideration, was obviously essential. That decision, however, involved a certain risk. Japan might be able to push her offensive to serious extremes. She might invade Australia or India. She might finally overcome the Chinese resistance. The limited military, naval and aerial Allied resources in the Far East, which their obligations in Europe prescribed, left America and Britain comparatively weak against any further Japanese attacks and made it impossible for them to launch a major counter-offensive. Above all it compelled them to withhold from China that scale of assistance which the prolonged struggle undertaken by Chiang Kai-Shek's forces morally demanded. The possibility of Chinese deterioration under the distressing conditions to which that country was subjected constituted an acute danger by the end of 1943.

It became evident, however, that Japan was in no position to enlarge her conquests. Her commitments were already far-flung. Her lines of communication were maritime and therefore liable to be cut should her main fleet meet with disaster. Wisely she decided to hold on to her gains without attempting any further ambitious adventures. When, by the summer of 1944, it was certain that Germany had lost the war, it became equally certain that the full limit of American-British strength must eventually be concentrated upon her. The Japanese strategy was therefore to dig herself in wherever she could safely defend her forces, to avoid any large-scale battle which might imperil her naval arm, and to hope that the prospect of a difficult and long drawn-out campaign would ultimately persuade the Allies to seek a



negotiated peace, in which some at least of her conquests would be retained.

On October 26, 1942, American naval and air forces won an important victory off the Stewart Islands, in which over a hundred enemy aircraft were destroyed, and two aircraft carriers, two battleships and three cruisers seriously damaged from the air. The result of this attack was that the Japanese were compelled to withdraw from the strategically valuable airfield in Guadalcanal and were vigorously pursued by American marines. But a greater victory was to follow. On November 16, after three days' fighting, the Americans destroyed twenty-three Japanese ships, also in the Solomon Islands, including a battleship, three heavy and two light cruisers. Twenty-four thousand soldiers went down with the transports sunk. By the second week of February 1943, the Japanese had finally withdrawn from Guadalcanal and abandoned the attempts which they had made for many months to drive out the American forces in the Solomons. At the same time they evacuated Buna in New Guinea. The Tokyo radio admitted that 16,750 of their troops had been killed in this campaign, but the Navy department at Washington estimated an enemy loss of 50,000. Seven hundred and seven Japanese aircraft had been destroyed, 57 ships sunk and 102 damaged.

The main obstacle confronting the American navy was distance. Naval operations are conditioned even more than land activities by dependence on bases and supplies. The American strategy was accordingly to capture outposts which could serve as bases and thus to creep nearer to the Philippines, as well as to watch for any incautious movement of the enemy which would expose him to attack and serious damage. But the enemy was too wily to incur such dangers, and consequently the record of the Pacific war is that of minor engagements and very gradual progress. On March 29, 1944, the heaviest surface and aerial bombardment ever attempted by the American Navy was launched on the Palau Islands. All the enemy ships in the harbour had been sunk by April 1, twenty-eight in all, and 160 aircraft destroyed. By the middle of April most of New Britain had been re-occupied, the Japanese being compelled to retreat into the Rabaul area, where their stores and shipping were subjected to continual bombing. A landing at Aitape,

Hollandia and Tanahmerah Bay was effected on April 22. The airfield at Tadjil was seized, and the Japanese XVIIIth Army was thus encircled by American and Australian forces. The Australians took Bogadjim on April 13.

The island of Saipan was finally captured by July 8, after twenty-five days' fierce fighting in which the whole Japanese garrison of 23,000 men was wiped out, 1,620 being taken prisoners. Tinian, three miles from Saipan, was occupied on the 28th. On July 30 American forces landed at Sansapor, near the west tip of Dutch New Guinea, as well as on the Amsterdam and Middleburg Islands. An American attack across the Driniumor River, in British New Guinea, cut off the Japanese east of Aitape.

If progress seemed to be slow, at least the initiative was now definitely in the hands of the Allies.

### *The Burma campaign, 1944*

Military operations in Asia were confined, apart from China, to the south-eastern theatre. The Allied front in Burma extended no less than 700 miles. The enemy had all the advantage to be derived from fighting on interior lines. They controlled all the water-ways in this area, the railways and roads, and since they were a rice-eating army suffered from no shortage of food. The Allies, on the contrary, in advancing from the west were confronted by steep mountain-barriers and swift rivers, all running north-south, and thus constituting a series of formidable barriers.

It had been decided at the Quebec Conference that an Allied Operational Command should take over from the British G.H.Q. in India and include the American Command in Burma and India. Preparations for the Second Front in Europe seriously curtailed the resources of the Allied forces, for all the landing-craft necessary for negotiating the campaign originally planned, had to be re-allotted. The main purpose of the Burmese operations was to drive the enemy out of the north-east corner of Burma and thus strengthen Allied communications with China.

At all costs, therefore, the Japanese had to be prevented from intercepting the progress of the American-Chinese forces. Two plans were designed for this purpose: the

first was to threaten the communications of the Japanese forces on the Ledo front, and the second to engage as many as possible of the enemy divisions in Burma. The former of these tasks was entrusted to General Wingate, a brilliant soldier and a remarkable man who, in some respects, may be likened to Lawrence of Arabia in the former war. Like Lawrence his military unorthodoxy won him stern opposition from the more traditionalist type of staff-officer. But his extraordinary abilities, and above all his power of understanding the mind of Asiatics, were ultimately recognised. He was brought to Burma by Lord Wavell from Abyssinia and Palestine. Wingate quickly realised that the British and Indians were hopelessly hampered by being tied to mechanised transport, and he set out to train a force which would be even more agile in this jungle-area than the Japanese. To no small degree the carrying-out of this campaign against appalling natural difficulties is due to his creativeness and foresight. It was nothing less than a national disaster when he met his death in an air-accident on March 24, 1944.

On March 16 three Japanese divisions crossed the Chindwin River and launched an attack on the whole Manipur front. They cut the main supply-road from Dimapur to Imphal, and the garrison at Kohima was thus isolated by land, though supplies continued to be carried to them by air. Indeed, the Japanese offensive played into Allied hands: by thus diverting his energy the enemy was unable to check Allied efforts to improve communications with the Chinese. A heavy attack was opened by the Allies to clear the Imphal road, and here the Japanese suffered a serious reverse. The Japanese Northern Division was battered to pieces and fled in disorder. The whole of the enemy offensive in this sector, which continued for five weeks, was thwarted. By the middle of May the garrison at Kohima was relieved. At no point had the enemy succeeded in holding a footing on the Imphal plain. Though they continued their attacks during May, they were driven out step by step from all positions round Kohima and on the Jessami Creek.

On August 6 the XIVth Army captured Tamu, sixty miles south-east of Imphal. This was regarded as the biggest defeat the Japanese army had as yet sustained.

British troops pushed on into the Kabaw Valley, occupying Tayagon and Taungni, while Indian troops took Sahnaw. Many of these operations took place in heavy rains. On August 17 it was announced that the last Japanese had been driven from Indian soil. An order by a Japanese general, dated about June 1, indicates the importance of these achievements. "It is my resolve," he stated, "to take Imphal. If a decisive victory is not obtained we shall not be able to strike again. On this one battle rests the fate of the Empire."

Meanwhile, heavy fighting was taking place elsewhere in this theatre. The Chinese forces under General Stilwell reached Mogaung on June 26, 1944, and the Chindit troops took Maingna at the same time. In the year ending June, 1944, enemy killed were reckoned at a total of 40,000, 17,700 of them in Upper Burma. Allied losses in 1944 up to July amounted to 10,000 killed, 3,000 missing and 27,000 wounded. Between May and the end of July 70,000 tons of supplies and 93,000 men had been carried by air. Between November 1943 and August 1944, 809 Japanese aircraft had been damaged or destroyed. Virtually the whole enemy air-force had been swept from the Burmese skies. Some indication of the climatic conditions under which these campaigns were fought may be gathered from the fact that in the first six months of 1944 a quarter of a million had gone sick in Burma, mainly from malaria and dysentery.

### *The situation in China*

Very little news during this period percolated through from China. The long struggle, the inability of the Allies to send direct aid on any large scale, the rise in prices and spread of inflation owing to war-privation, were known to be producing a considerable psychological deterioration. The aim of the Allies could only be to encourage China to hold out until victory elsewhere would make it possible for them to send relief.

By the summer of 1944 the general position was that Japan held about 3 per cent. of the total area of China. But these comparatively small territorial gains comprised

most of the important centres of communication. Many of the key-centres and ports, as well as railway-centres were in enemy hands. There was little need for Japan to increase her gains: she was in a position gradually to strangle her foe. Strangely enough, Japanese goods, such as food and cotton, were on sale in Chungking. The quantity of these were, of course, restricted by the Japanese, and in return she received articles of use to her, such as wolfram and oil, this commerce being organised under a black market controlled by the Japanese authorities.

On paper the Chinese numbered three million to only 600,000 enemy troops. The British and American Governments were supplying the Chinese with munitions, supplies and funds, to the best of their ability: but shortage of available shipping put a heavy limit on these services. Allied military strategy was largely directed towards re-opening the Burma road, but the Chinese authorities pointed out that it would be a long time before the serious damage done to this artery could be repaired. The XIVth American Air Force was meanwhile operating within China and raiding enemy lines of communications and concentrations.

In north-west China the Communists still predominated, but their efficient army received little part of the Lease-Lend munitions sent to the Chungking Government by America. Indeed, the attitude of General Chiang Kai-Shek and his Kuomintang party had perceptibly hardened into that of uneasy truce with the Communists. The landlords and industrialists, particularly in regions removed from the Japanese occupation, were more hostile to these revolutionary elements than to the official enemy. Although nominally democratic the Kuomintang Government had become markedly dictatorial in character. Secret police activities and ruthless persecution of any persons suspected of Communist affiliations were rampant. The sense of national unity had entirely deteriorated under the stress of prolonged war. This, indeed, was the price of the inevitable decision taken by the Allies at an earlier stage, namely that the war in Europe must be their first main consideration. The main problem was whether China could survive her bitter ordeal and hold out until the Allied effort could be concentrated in the Far East. One symptom of the increasing

strain was the withdrawal of General Stilwell in 1944, at Chinese request, from the Chinese theatre. Dissatisfaction among the Chinese with the restricted amount of American aid expressed itself in criticism of the individual American officer directly responsible for the campaign.

In May 1944, the Japanese launched a large-scale offensive against Loyang, and seized the greater part of the Pekin-Hankow railway. By May 14 the Chinese commenced a counter-attack, recaptured Suiping and claimed to be surrounding Chimatien, a few miles to the south. The Japanese, however, virtually cut off the Chinese forces in Honan.

A more serious enemy attack matured towards the end of the month, south of Yochow. Japanese forces crossed the Tungting Lake and occupied positions on the south-west shore. Their strategy was to establish a line of control down the centre of China from north to south along the Pekin-Hankow-Canton railway. The danger was obvious. By so doing they would cut China in half. In August the peasants in North China were reported to be mining the approaches to their villages and setting booby-traps.

The Tokyo wireless on August 11 reported the capture of Hengyang (in Hunan)—the American air-base had been taken on June 26. Chinese reports, however, stated that fierce resistance north and west of the town was in progress. The Chinese communique of August 14 announced that in the Liling sector Chinese forces were advancing towards the city. Early in September the Japanese captured Lingling in South Hunan and were massing troops in the north of Indo-China. That the military situation as a whole was becoming desperately serious was evident by the autumn of 1944. It seemed that Chungking itself must ultimately be threatened, and its loss would, in the Generalissimo's words, prolong the Far Eastern war possibly for five years. Fortunately, by December 1944, a series of Chinese counter-attacks relieved the position. The Japanese column which had been threatening Kweiyang was driven back over the Kwangsi border, while another column to the south-east was halted owing to the difficulties of supply. The recall of General Stilwell in the autumn of that year had revealed in some respects American exasperation at the Chinese deterioration. It is significant that that deterioration was

so closely concerned with the Chinese Government's attempts to repress the Communists. Until the summer of 1944 no foreign journalist was allowed to visit Communist territory, although the Communists were the only active element pressing for national unity and vigorous measures against the enemy. A large Chinese army was entrenched against the Communists' forces instead of fighting the Japanese.

Clearly a violently reactionary element predominated in Kai-Shek's ministry, an element which was more interested in opposing the Left than in driving out the invader. All the evidence forthcoming as to the Chinese Communists showed that these forces, far from indulging in brigandage and outlawry, were establishing a much more virile civilization than was represented by the decadence of the Chinese big landlords and traders. Chinese Communism may well prove to be one of the most interesting and valuable developments in the modern world, and it spoke well for the influence of the American State Department that under pressure the Chinese Government was reconstituted in November 1944, on slightly less reactionary lines. The worst offender, General Ho Ying-Chin, was relieved of his position as War Minister, though he remained Chief of Staff.

No less than sixteen divisions, which ought to have been reinforcing the Chinese forces at the front, had been employed by Chiang Kai-Shek to blockade the Communists. Under American pressure some of these divisions were recalled. Mao Tse-tung, the Communist leader, was, however, still regarded by the Chinese Government as a 'bandit.' Mr Mansfield, who had been sent by President Roosevelt on a special mission to report on conditions in Yenan, gave an entirely different picture to the House of Representatives. Ninety million people were living, as he pointed out, under Communist rule in China, while over eight million were in Communist provinces behind the Japanese lines. Mao Tse-tung was described as a leader of considerable qualities and the Communist administration enlightened and orderly. An immensely valuable reserve of strength against the enemy was not only being ignored but was actually treated as hostile by the corrupt landowning and financial interests which wielded so great an influence in Chiang Kai-Shek's counsels.

*Political developments in Japan*

Very meagre were the reports forthcoming as to the fate of British and American prisoners-of-war in Japanese hands. Whereas in Germany and Italy the Red Cross had set up an excellent administration through which British prisoners could send and receive correspondence and obtain supplies, a veil of silence had descended on the Far East. Mr Eden shocked the House of Commons by his account of the privations and cruelty to which both British civilians and combatants who had fallen into Japanese hands were being subjected. A few relations in Britain would receive an occasional post-card which had taken many months to cross the world. But little or no information was forthcoming to allay their anxieties.

On two public occasions in 1944 Mr Churchill had felt justified in giving his opinion that the war in the Far East would not be prolonged for so great a period, after victory in Europe had been achieved, as he had previously feared. Certainly the prospects of the Japanese were none too favourable. Not only had they to face the inevitable concentration of British-American strength, once Germany was defeated, but they no longer held the initiative. Their difficulties were slowly but perceptibly increasing.

Some reflection of this uneasiness could be traced in the changes which took place at the end of July 1944, in the Tokyo Government. In February 1944, General Tojo emerged as Premier, War Minister, Minister of Munitions and Chief of the Army Staff. On July 18 Tojo resigned, General Koiso succeeding him.

Much interest was aroused, accordingly, in the personnel of the new Government. Was its appearance a sign of consciousness on the part of the Japanese that defeat was in sight? This more extreme optimism was certainly premature. Koiso, Admiral Yonai and General Sugiyama, the chief figures, were men of much the same outlook as Tojo. Three ministers in the former Cabinet were retained. Of these the most interesting was Shigemitsu, the Foreign Minister, whose re-appointment suggested a victory of the diplomats over the militarists. The political history of Japan during the war had been mainly that of the complete



seizure of governmental power by the military clique. Koiso's contribution was essentially that of a restoration of the balance of power, a return of civilian representation to weigh against the service bureaucrats.

The Japanese Information Bureau, indeed, in effect confirmed this interpretation. In the official statement issued on Tojo's resignation, Tojo's dismissal was explained on the ground that he had neglected to give the people of Japan "full opportunity to employ their irresistible enthusiasm for an all-out war effort." The new Government announced as its motive "more scope for free expression of opinion in public, in order to raise the people's morale and fighting spirit." It was not without significance that the successor to Tojo's Propaganda Minister was a journalist.

The new Government had certainly not been elected to explore the possibilities of a negotiated peace: it was pledged to an increased war-effort. But its appearance was at least an indication that all was not well with the Japanese nation. The toll of the war-effort was beginning to have its effect. The day of sudden and dramatic victories was past. Some concession had to be sought to meet a wave of inevitable discontent, now that no hope of final victory was on the horizon. The intention of the new Government, namely of retaining the chief prizes of the struggle without ruining the country, must ultimately prove itself impracticable. But time alone would bring home that reality to the full consciousness of the people.

Some indication of the waning naval fortunes of the Japanese was afforded by the Battle of the Philippines, which opened on October 16, 1944. This had been preceded for a week by continual air-attacks on Formosa. On October 10, heavy bombing of Luzon was commenced, and the serious damage inflicted on the whole of the enemy West Pacific bases at last drew the Japanese navy to the scene of operations. Fantastic accounts were put out by the Japanese as to the results of this encounter. The entire American fleet under Admiral Halsey was said to have been sunk. Actually, the Japanese ships hurriedly withdrew, but not before American submarines had sunk thirty-three enemy vessels, including eight transports and three destroyers.

On October 19 this important victory was followed by an invasion of Leyte Island in the central Philippines. One hundred thousand American troops were landed, with slight losses, and the Japanese positions in the islands were severed. This operation was of particular interest, for it proved that, provided sufficient cover from carrier-based aircraft was available, a large-scale amphibious invasion is possible without support from land-based fighter aircraft. This undertaking marked also a compromise between the views of the American War and Navy Departments. The former was supposed to favour the tactic of freeing the enemy-occupied islands on the south-west fringe of the 'co-prosperity zone' before attempting any invasion nearer to Japan. The Navy Department, on the other hand, believed that a base could be secured on Formosa from which an attack should be launched on the Japanese home-land, bye-passing the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies.

The campaign, though limited to local landings and offensives, continued successfully through December 1944. On January 9 a more ambitious undertaking was carried out; landings were made by the Americans on four beaches in Lingayen Gulf, Luzon. More than 100,000 men were disembarked and in two days the bridgehead had been enlarged to a length of twenty-five miles and a depth of nine miles. Japanese opposition was weak, thanks to the heavy preparatory bombing of their transport. By the end of the month the American forces had captured five airfields and had penetrated fifty miles inland. Bombing of enemy positions in the whole Pacific area could now become more formidable. Tokyo, Nagoya, Omura and the Sakishima Islands were among the targets. On January 11 Singapore was attacked by B 29s, flying 3,500 miles to and from India, without loss.

Japanese casualties on Luzon up to the 24th of the month were estimated at over 14,000, while the corresponding American figures were 657 killed and 2,301 wounded; subsequently, the main objective was attained: Manila was recaptured from the enemy.

Meanwhile, the new year also saw a rapid improvement in the Burma theatre. The XIVth Army occupied Monywa without opposition, and two days later were in possession of Tizaung and Myinmu. Japanese counter-attacks against

the Allied bridgeheads across the Irrawaddy, north of Mandalay, were successfully repulsed. On January 22, 1945, General Sultan was able to announce the opening of the Ledo Road, linking with the old Burma Road at Mongyu. Landings had been made on coast and islands in the Akyab area. The Japanese had now been forced out of Upper Burma, and these landings were designed to proceed with the work of liberating as much of Lower Burma as possible before the May monsoon set in. The enemy tactics were evidently to fight hard to retain Mandalay and generally to delay the Allied advance. The opening up of the Ledo Road was an important gain from the standpoint of supplies for China, but as transport by this route would be practicable only in the dry season the air link from Assam would still be the main line of communications.

*The offensive against Japan, 1945*

By the early months of 1945 the Allied campaign had assumed considerable proportions. The Japanese were everywhere on the defensive. On March 14 the American flag was hoisted over Iwojima, the first portion of the inner citadel to be invaded. An American fleet was shelling and bombing Formosa and islands in the Ryukyu group. Okinawa was attacked on April 1, and two airfields seized. The island of Basilan was taken on March 18, while the Australians were already making progress in New Britain and New Guinea. French forces had commenced operations in Indo-China and on March 17 were reported to have encircled the enemy in North Bay. American marines occupied the southern tip of the Sulu archipelago on April 4, and on the previous day another American force had isolated the Katchin peninsula by penetrating across Okinawa. The American fleet off Okinawa was attacked by a strong formation of enemy aircraft, on the night of April 6, and lost three destroyers, but at a cost of 116 planes.

Bombing attacks on Japan were now becoming more frequent. Two thousand tons of bombs were dropped on Osaka on the night of March 13. Kobe and Nagoya, as well as an airfield on Bonin Island were heavily bombarded.

Air attacks on Tokyo were mainly undertaken by B 29s from Saipan. Shanghai and Hong Kong were also visited.

By the first week in April Allied H.Q. were able to announce that the Japanese army in central Burma no longer existed as an effective military unit. In the last four months' fighting in Burma the Japanese losses had exceeded 50,000. Elsewhere, in planes and naval craft the enemy casualties had reached a prodigious figure. On April 3 the Japanese authorities announced that the fate of the nation would rapidly be decided. Tokyo appreciated that the Allied strategy was designed to sever communications between Japan and China, and then to invade Japan. On May 3, Allied forces entered Rangoon, and Burma was thus almost entirely in Allied hands.

But, serious as the situation had become for the enemy, the Allies were not as yet even within sight of victory. An invasion of Japan would obviously be a most formidable task, in view of its mountain barriers. Should the decision be to fight the main campaign in China, bad communications and immense distances must prove a greater obstacle than had been encountered in any other theatre of the war. In April 1945, the Soviet Union formally denounced its Neutrality Pact, thus giving notice that in due course the U.S.S.R. would be free to declare war on Japan. It is significant that within an hour of this proclamation the Japanese Government had resigned. The Koiso Ministry had shown itself to be incompetent in every field: it had nothing but losses and withdrawals to its record. Admiral Suzuki, an elderly man who had served for many years as confidential adviser to the Emperor, had been nearly murdered by the military extremists in 1936, and had enjoyed friendly relations with Joseph C. Grew, the former American Ambassador in Tokyo and now holding second place in the State Department. The new Government was of a comparatively colourless character, certainly not composed of elements which would adopt a defeatist policy, but probably ready to welcome any opportunity to discuss a negotiated peace.

The willingness of Japan to discuss terms was indicated by a curious incident which occurred in April 1945, when the news of President Roosevelt's death was announced: tribute was paid to this 'arch-enemy' by the Japanese

official radio. The political strategy of Japan was, in fact, obvious. Though many of the gains which had been won after Pearl Harbour and which were still intact, would have to be surrendered, Tokyo evidently reckoned that the Allies might be ready to discuss terms and to adopt a different attitude from that which they were vigorously adopting towards Germany. Not only, Japanese statesmen could argue, would the military difficulties before final victory could be achieved be so serious that a campaign of two or three years would possibly be involved, not only would the Allies be comparatively exhausted by their conquest in Europe, not only would they be committed at home to a policy of some degree of demobilization rather than a full-pressure continuation of the war-effort, but, unlike Germany, Japan could at any moment supply the type of Government with which the Allies might be prepared to treat. Here, again, there would be problems for the Allies and likelihood of disunity, with consequent advantage to Japan. America would certainly not consent to the rise of a revolutionary order in Japan, such as the Soviet Union might desire. Conversely, Moscow had no intention of assenting to an American invasion and occupation of territory so strategically challenging to Soviet security in the Far East. Japan with no little sagacity had weighed these considerations and concluded that the chances of a negotiated peace were far from unpromising. And, once negotiations were agreed upon, she might hope to gain something out of the eventual treaty, so that the war from her point of view would not have been wholly without purpose.

## CHAPTER 13

# THE INVASION OF WESTERN EUROPE

### *Allied bombing attacks on Germany*

FROM the Soviet standpoint the demand for a second front in Europe was entirely relevant. The Red Army was bearing the full brunt of the German military offensive and what from their standpoint was urgently needed was an invasion in the West on a scale which would draw off at least some sixty enemy divisions. Even if an Allied landing ended in complete defeat, the price, so the more extreme advocates of the Soviet case maintained, would be worth paying: the Russians could break through the weakened German forces and end the war in 1943. The British-American view, as we have seen, was that a second Dunkirk would be a disaster which at all cost must be avoided. No invasion must be attempted until it could be carried out effectively and with a reasonable prospect of success.

The immediate strategy of the British-American authorities had been the offensive in North Africa. Though this campaign led to the invasion of Italy and the liberation of the Mediterranean, at no point did it draw off from the Eastern Front a number of enemy divisions sufficient to imperil the German position in Russia. Yet, almost certainly, the ultimate judgment of history will be that the decision not to launch an invasion precipitately was wise: a second Dunkirk would eventually have proved as great a calamity for Soviet fortunes as for Britain and America. What, however, weakened the case for delaying the Second Front was the suspicion that the Allied plans were based on an overestimate of the effects of large-scale bombing. Some official utterances suggested that these aerial attacks would become the decisive factor, in the sense that a military landing, if not unnecessary, would be robbed of most of its risks by a softening of enemy resources and lines of communication. It is debatable whether this calculation was to any extent justified. What facilitated the Allied invasion was the bombing of the French areas prior to the

landing and the immense superiority of aircraft to the comparatively few planes which the Luftwaffe could muster. But the long months of aerial attacks on Germany and the occupied countries had produced little immediate effect on the ability of Germany to carry on the war. Nor was there any perceptible decline of German morale. Appalling as in many cities the havoc and terror must have been, there was no development of an anti-war movement, or any evidence of widespread defeatism.

Certainly the bombing-policy was put fully to the test. The small attacks which were all that the British could undertake in 1941 mounted to stupendous proportions and were presently reinforced by American operations. Hamburg was put out of action as a port, Cologne, Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich and most of the other German cities were heavily damaged. During April 1944, no less than 81,000 tons were dropped on enemy territory, 4,500 tons falling on Cologne in a single night. There is no doubt, of course, that the total effect of these onslaughts seriously embarrassed the Nazi war-machine: as a result, for example, of the offensive in the month already mentioned all railway yards from Cologne westward for a depth of 100 miles were out of use for the marshalling of trains: 50,000 skilled workers had to be brought from other areas to repair the damage. Airfields, factories, railways, bridges, oil-refineries, synthetic oil-plants, harbours, shipping were wrecked. The most formidable attacks on London and the south in the heyday of the blitz were puny in comparison. Had bombing been proved a decisive, as distinct from a contributory, factor all German resistance and preparation must have been paralysed.

As the hour for the great undertaking drew nearer the air-offensive was even further intensified. On May 27, 1944, more than 3,000 aircraft flew over Germany. In the first five days of June 1944, the attacks were mainly directed to the Pas de Calais, the Seine and the Oise, and were carried out almost without loss. The subjection of France to these attacks meant inevitably that not only buildings but the lives of Allied sympathisers among the French civilians were sacrificed. Rouen and Havre, as well as other French and Belgian towns, were heavily damaged.

*The invasion of Normandy*

In order to keep the enemy in suspense, Allied propaganda and the utterances of Mr Churchill and other statesmen had continually implied that the invasion was imminent. Even as early as 1943 this had been the note sounded. The British people, however, were also affected by the tension. As the spring of 1944 passed into summer the cry was not infrequently heard, 'will it ever come?' Each season of the full moon was anxiously watched. But the approximate date had been fixed at Teheran in December 1943. On the night of June 5-6, 1944, landings were made on the beaches of Courseulles, Arromanches and other small Norman coastal towns north of Bayeux and Caen.

This was the most gigantic invasion by sea and air ever as yet undertaken. The feats of preparation were successful to an almost incredible degree. In the first twenty-four hours a quarter of a million men were landed, in twenty days over a million men were ashore. By September nearly three million men were in France, without the seizure of a single large harbour. Huge improvised harbours were towed across the channel by ships. A submarine pipe line was laid to feed the invading armies with oil. During the night of June 5, 5,000 tons of bombs were dropped on ten German coastal batteries, and during June 6, 20,000 tons of bombs fell from American planes. British and American air-forces blew up all the railway-bridges over the Seine between Havre and Rouen. Between dawn on June 6 and noon on June 8 there had been 27,000 air-sorties, and 176 enemy planes destroyed, apart from those damaged by the bombing of aerodromes. The Allies in this period lost 289 aircraft.

But the tremendous effect of Allied air-operations was not the only cause of the Allied success: the German High Command contributed to the victory by committing several grave errors. Never could it be said that the German armies were not defeated on the field, as had been pleaded in 1918. They were defeated in Normandy primarily by superior generalship.

The first objective of the Allies was to consolidate the beach-heads between the Cotentin Peninsula and the



mouth of the Orne, and to link up with the airborne troops landed farther inland. The German attempts to prevent this consolidation were handicapped by an inferiority of one to twenty in the air and by an even greater inferiority of naval craft. But the German failure was due also to bad strategy, to a sudden switch-over of tactics in the very hour of crisis. The original German plan to frustrate an invasion had been a defence in depth, so that gradually the Allied first thrusts could have been liquidated and further advance prevented by a long chain of formidable reserves. But the whole of this plan was diverted at the last moment to a policy of defence on the spot. It is doubtful whether General Kluge, who was in command of the immediate operations, was responsible for this disastrous decision. Disastrous indeed it was, for the effect of relying mainly on the shore-defences was to expose them to the heaviest naval bombardment which has ever before in history been inflicted. The British superiority in naval artillery was thus given its opportunity. On the night of June 7 the enemy attempted to interfere with the vast quantity of supplies arriving by sea, by an E-boat and destroyer attack. This was driven off, and all the destroyers set on fire by Beaufighters.

By June 11 General Montgomery was able to report that "we have won the battle of the beaches." The invasion of the beach-heads had been completed on a front of sixty miles. General Kluge now made his most deadly mistake. He assumed that the American divisions would be inexperienced and less likely to carry out a successful advance than the British. Accordingly, he concentrated his Panzer mass-attacks against the British-Canadian wing, on the Caen-Tilly sector. For a few days the British public viewed with alarm the apparent hold-up on the left flank and were inclined to criticise Montgomery's cautious strategy. Actually, this temporary hold-up was of immense advantage to the Allies. Kluge's miscalculation enabled the Americans to advance through the peninsula at a speed which was double the rate of any previous military advance, with the aid of airborne formations, used with masterly skill, and to capture Cherbourg. The German failure to drive a wedge between the Americans and British-Canadian forces resulted in an almost complete encirclement at the Falaise Gap, and, later, on the Seine and the Somme.

The sensational success of the Allies at this initial stage of the invasion owes also not a little to the campaign of sabotage simultaneously launched by the French resistance movements. The railway between Limoges and Bordeaux was cut, while in the Rhone Valley all traffic, through the wrecking of railways, canals and locks, was brought to a standstill. The Maquis took prisoners, seized villages and were in some regions already in full control of the countryside by the time the Allies arrived. The French Forces of the Interior liberated eight Departments in Brittany and the south by mid-August: captured Toulouse and Hendaye: almost completely freed the entire Lyons district—occupying Lyons itself on August 24: were in control of all the roads leading into Italy: and soon were fighting in Paris.

Meanwhile, thanks to the mistaken German tactics, the Americans were left free to push on towards Mantes, and on August 21 they were crossing the Seine. They also established a bridgehead near Fontainebleau. Sens was entered on the 22nd, and the Germans, after requesting an armistice, threatened to destroy Paris. A special call for Allied help was sent from the capital, and, in response to this, American and French forces attacked the main German positions covering Versailles. The Germans at Bernay, east of Lisieux, attempted a stand, but were in danger of being outflanked and by August 25 had abandoned all resistance in this sector. By August 28 the Americans had crossed the Marne at Meaux and had entered Chateau Thierry, while tank-formations were moving forward in the whole area between the Seine and Marne. General de Gaulle was able to enter Paris on the evening of August 25. The scenes in the city were dramatic to a degree which befitted this historic moment. Vast crowds of citizens, cheering deliriously at their deliverance from four years of dark captivity, paraded the streets, but were frequently under fire from the remaining centres of German resistance. French Fascists fired on de Gaulle when he walked at the head of his troops to Notre Dame on the 26th. But the tide had turned against the collaborators. The Vichy Government broke up in disorder. Pétain was removed under German custody to Baden-Baden, and Laval was placed under the 'protection' of the Gestapo.

By the end of August the British II<sup>nd</sup> Army was across

the lower Seine, had reached the Somme and established a bridgehead at Amiens. The Canadians had occupied Rouen and were pushing on towards Dieppe, which was taken a few days later. Abbeville was captured on September 4, and the IIInd Army reached Arras. Two Allied spearheads crossed the Belgian frontier on September 2, one pushing along the Sambre from Maubeuge, covering sixty miles in twenty-four hours, and seizing Lens, Douai and the Vimy Ridge in their stride: the other converged on Tournai. The next day, September 3, Brussels was liberated. Lille fell on the 4th. Antwerp was entered without much opposition. The Belgian resistance-forces gave valuable help, derailing enemy troop-trains and blowing up bridges. The second week of September saw the Americans across the Moselle, having advanced nearly 750 miles in thirty-five days. The British IIInd Army had covered 200 miles in five days. Polish troops captured Ypres on September 6, and the same day the British entered Ghent, Courtrai and Armentières.

Nor was this the only theatre of Allied victory in the west. On August 15 British, American and French forces landed at several points on the French Mediterranean coast between Toulon and Nice. On the 23rd Marseilles was entered and was finally freed on the 28th. Rapid progress was made up the Rhone Valley, so that by the first week in September the whole of France from the lower Rhone to the Atlantic was clear of the enemy. Toulon and Nice had fallen by August 31. The Americans entered Lyons on September 3, and another American column crossed the Faucille Pass, north of Geneva. The French occupied Dijon on the 11th, and, away to the west, the French Liberation Forces captured the city of Bordeaux, outside the port, on August 31.

These bewildering successes were accompanied by enormous enemy losses. The Battle of France had cost the Germans 900,000 men killed, wounded and captured. British losses were over 90,000 and Americans 145,000. Loss of enemy material up to the end of August alone included 3,600 aircraft, 300 naval vessels, 20,000 cars and 1,300 tanks. The Nazi fortress had crumbled to an extent and with a rapidity which few of the Allied military or political leaders could have dared to anticipate. All but

the outskirts of France were freed. Belgium was invaded, and towards the close of the autumn southern Holland was partly in Allied occupation. In a few short weeks the military situation had been transformed. Inevitable defeat and disaster confronted the Nazis. And it is small wonder that among the Allied peoples a wave of optimism spread, a belief that the war would be over and the last German resistance overwhelmed by Christmas, 1944.

*Flying bombs and rockets over England*

But these hopes were not to be fulfilled. The reaction of the German nation to this series of catastrophes did not take the form of revolt against the forces which had led them to the limits of ruin. The first reaction came from the clique of senior military officers and was not a popular uprising: it was nevertheless an attempt to assassinate Hitler. Since the defeat at Stalingrad it had been evident that the Army Command was becoming increasingly apprehensive as to the disastrous results of the Fuehrer's amateur military strategy. On the night of July 20, 1944, a high explosive bomb exploded close to Hitler, killing one of his companions but apparently inflicting only slight injuries on Hitler himself. In spite of Nazi efforts to maintain that this was a plot engineered by only a handful of individual generals it became known that the revolt had spread comparatively widely in the senior officer-class. It was an endeavour of the High Command to overthrow the entire Gestapo and Nazi influence. But it was launched prematurely. No effort had been made by this clique to link up with any popular resistance elements, indeed it would have been contrary to its principles to do so, even probably as an immediate tactic. The revolt led to an easy Nazi victory. Not only were a small number of generals liquidated, but the majority of officers who would have gladly joined the rebels, had their attempt proved successful, held their hand. Still more important, the ruthless purge which followed the arrest of the leading conspirators succeeded in crushing out the last remnants which might have made for a revolutionary uprising. The Nazis remained in full control, and the German people settled

down to a condition of a dazed and fatalist acquiescence in the prosecution of a war which they now knew could only end in defeat. Nazi propaganda to the German people was mainly based on the theme that surrender to the Allies would involve such appalling suffering that it would be a better fate to die fighting. In extravagant terms they insisted that the Allies meant to exterminate German manpower and to reduce the rest of the populace to abject misery. In these threats Dr Goebbels was immensely assisted by the wilder followers of Lord Vansittart, who, by indulging their emotions of revenge against Nazi barbarities, were advocating a reckless severity in the treatment of Germany. The official Allied demand for unconditional surrender, and the absence of any explicit declaration as to what would be done to Germany and the Germans when the war ended, undoubtedly in this situation encouraged German resistance. Even if there was no longer any possibility of internal revolt in Germany, a positive official statement, rebutting the Nazi melodramatic statements and promising that, after disarmament, the German people would be helped to recover and take their natural place in the commonwealth of peoples, would at least have undermined the enemy will to resist and might thereby have considerably shortened the war.

The Nazi justification for continuing the war when the situation had become desperate was based on three calculations. First, the military policy was to form a new front far behind the territory where their forces had been so heavily defeated, in the hope of delaying for a prolonged period the Allied attempt to invade Germany itself. As a result of this policy, France, Belgium, and to some extent southern Holland were written off by the enemy as bad debts. Even here at many points the Germans fought with great determination. They continued to maintain pockets of resistance round the French ports, a wise move on their part since Allied supplies were greatly hampered by their inability to make use of the larger harbours. Thus, Havre was heroically defended until September 12, and Brest was not cleared of the enemy until September 20: other ports remained in enemy hands till the end of the war. The Allies, also wisely, by-passed these areas and did not allow themselves to be diverted from their rapid

advance by concentrating their attacks on these prizes. Calais and Boulogne held out until the end of the month. In Belgium the Allies were denied the use of Antwerp up to the beginning of November by the German artillery occupation of Walcheren Island.

Secondly, the enemy hoped by prolonging the war to have fuller opportunity for sowing seeds of dissension among the Allies. A breach between the Soviet Union and the British-American Governments would have been worth to Germany a thousand military victories. In the prosecution of this aim, however, German efforts were less skilful.

Thirdly, great store had been set on the use of new weapons, to be employed chiefly against the British civilian population. Early in 1943 it had been known to the British Government that experiments were being made in the production of a jet-propelled fly-bomb which would have a range of at least 150 miles and could travel at the rate of 350 to 400 miles an hour. Intelligence reported that the new weapon was being prepared on the Baltic coast, mainly at Peenemunde. Allied photographs were taken and heavy bombing of this target was subsequently carried out. As a result the German plans for launching these missiles were seriously delayed: it was expected that they would be in full operation by October 1943. In November of that year it was discovered that sites were being prepared along the Channel coast from Calais to Cherbourg. Bombing operations were commenced in December 1943, but the difficulty of identifying the exact location was considerable, in view of the elaborate camouflage. The enemy, however, was compelled to abandon many of these sites, and in March 1944, commenced to construct simplified and deeper emplacements, eliminating conspicuous storage buildings near the sites.

These V-1s were launched just after the invasion of Normandy had begun. In three months over 8,000 of these were fired, and 2,300 of them exploded in the London region. Guns and balloons—2,000 of the latter—were moved in two days to prepared positions south-east of London, and although both anti-aircraft and plane defences took a toll of 70 per cent. of the missiles, the damage and losses caused were considerable. 140 schools, 103 churches,

98 hospitals were wrecked and human deaths amounted to an average of one per bomb. The enormous surface-blast of these bombs, moreover, caused extensive casualties, a majority of them being due to injuries from glass. Still more serious was the effect on morale. These missiles, arriving every day and all through the day and night, often with little more than a twenty minutes' 'all clear' interval, caused a far greater nervous tension than the worst of the blitzes. The fact that this attack was concentrated on London and the southern Home Counties—a light attack was made on the Portsmouth and Southampton areas in June—had the effect of localising this new and intensified war-strain. Many people in the North and the Midlands, who had not heard an alert for a year or more, were unable to realise how severe was the ordeal to which Londoners were being subjected, and were apt to adopt a callous attitude to the flood of evacuees escaping from the onslaught.

Had not the German time-table been so seriously disarranged the V-1s would have constituted a very serious menace. But the advance of British-Canadian forces along the coast from Normandy northwards compelled the enemy gradually to abandon his sites. An extremely misjudged statement made to the Press by Mr Duncan Sandys on September 7, 1944, gave the impression that these 'fly-bombs' were finally conquered, and the Press report was not unnaturally treated by the evacuees as a virtual invitation to return. The Germans, however, now began to launch the missiles from planes over the North Sea. Although this was too hazardous an operation to allow for anything like the same scale of attack, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey and the London area continued to suffer, mainly after dark. Moreover, a new weapon was now put into action. The V-2 became known as the rocket-bomb and was a much more ambitious invention. It was fired to a height of 70 to 90 miles into the stratosphere, and fell with such enormous speed that it was ahead of its own sound. There could be no defence against this type of offensive, but fortunately the highly scientific calculations which the manipulation of V-2s required did not render it an accurate weapon. Moreover, though its penetration was deep, its surface-blast was comparatively slight. The total number of V-2s which reached Britain was estimated at 1,050.

9,277 casualties were caused, of which 2,754 were fatal. Deptford, Stepney, Smithfield Market, Islington and Marble Arch were among the sites in the London district where explosions took place, but most of these missiles landed in Essex and Kent. Southern England was finally freed from this menace in March 1945, the last rocket falling in Orpington on the 27th: the first was in September 1944, at Chiswick. In April 1945, dim-out regulations were abolished in all but a narrow coastal belt.

The V-2s had been fired mainly from Holland and Jutland, and the Germans claimed that their range could be so indefinitely extended that New York would eventually become a target. Had the German plans been unaffected by the invasion, V-2s as well as V-1s, and probably other missiles, would have been hurled incessantly upon Southern England. London would have had to be evacuated almost completely, and precautions against enemy invasion in the south and east would have been seriously compromised. Certainly these developments were a grim reminder of the potentialities of a third world-war.

The cleaning-up process on the Channel coast, culminating finally on September 29, 1944, with the capitulation of the Cap Gris Nez forts, brought to a close the ordeal of Dover, Folkestone and other towns in this corner of Kent. For over four years this population had suffered incessant bombardment from shells and bombs. Many of the younger children could not remember the experience of sleeping at night in bedrooms at home. Dover and the adjacent towns permitted themselves a celebration of thanksgiving when at length they were released from front-line conditions.

### *German retreat in Europe, autumn 1944*

The stiffening of enemy resistance became more marked by October 1944. The Allies had by now penetrated farther into Southern Holland, but the Germans retaliated by flooding large areas of the low-lying country, causing thereby grievous damage to the civilian population. Appalling and abnormal weather-conditions largely contributed to the hold-up of the Allied advance: the wild storms of rain and gale, and the low ceiling, robbed both the British



and American air-arm of making the fullest use of its vast numerical superiority. It was not until the first week in November that the Scheldt estuary was clear of enemy guns, so that the mine-fields could be destroyed and the port of Antwerp opened up for Allied supplies. The hopes which had been aroused by the dramatic collapse of Nazi defences in France and Belgium, that the war might be over before the end of 1944, died away. An attempt to turn the German right-flank at the Rhine delta around Arnhem, Nijmegen and Eindhoven, by landing airborne troops and linking up with them by a main advance, failed. The airborne troops could not be reached in time, and after several days of heroic endurance and activities in enemy-territory, almost comparable to Wingate's exploits in Burma, this small force had to attempt a withdrawal. Some hundred officers and men of the British 1st Airborne Division managed to get through the German lines, but many others were killed and captured. The story of that feat adds to the list of the remarkable adventures which this war has furnished. One night, for example, a detachment of these troops climbed into two lorries and made off to their own lines, while the Germans were moving along the same road, apparently assuming that the British-laden lorries carried their own supplies. One officer, who was taken prisoner, escaped and for twelve days hid in a cupboard, with only a bottle of water and a few slices of bread for nourishment.

When all allowance had been made for the hampering effect of weather-conditions and the absence of sufficient large ports for landing of supplies, tribute must be paid to the efficiency of the German armies and to the strategy of their Staff direction at this stage. Since the disappearance of Hitler from the scene—his usual October anniversary speech was read by Himmler, who was rapidly assuming the functions of fuhrer—the enemy military tactics had perceptibly improved. Not only had the Germans formed a strong new front in the west, but on the Polish and East Prussian fronts they had brought the Red Army to a standstill. Russian activities were mainly concerned with closing in on Budapest and threatening the enemy positions from the Danube, while cutting off and cleaning up the last enemy positions in Latvia and the Baltic. In the

extreme north, now Finland had capitulated, the Soviet forces crossed into Norwegian territory.

The occupation of Rumania and Bulgaria by the Red Army and their support of the Allies under the terms of armistice meant that the Germans could no longer hope to hold any part of the Balkans. In Greece, Athens and the Piræus were liberated by partisans on October 12, 1944, and two days later British troops entered. In Albania the Quisling Government fell on October 28, Tirana was evacuated by the Germans, and almost the whole of the country had been freed at the end of November 1944 by the partisans, aided by British landings and air-borne supplies. The Aegean was clear of enemy shipping by the first week in November. In Herzegovina and Montenegro British troops were in action side by side with Tito's forces. In Yugoslavia Bulgarian contingents took Kumanovo on November 12. The Germans effected a successful withdrawal, but everywhere they were in retreat. The Nazi grip on South-eastern Europe was rapidly loosening.

By the middle of November 1944, there were signs that the comparative lull in the West was coming to an end. The various Allied contingents swung round in preparation for a united drive on Germany. General Eisenhower's plan of campaign began to take clearer shape. In the north from Arnheim to Roermond, the British II<sup>nd</sup> Army under General Dempsey faced the river Maas with the Ruhr as their immediate objective. The American IV<sup>th</sup> Army had crossed the German frontier, and with the American I<sup>st</sup> on their right, had taken Aachen and were in possession of the roads leading eastwards to Cologne and Bonn. The I<sup>st</sup> Army held a long front, covering Luxembourg. General Patton's American III<sup>rd</sup> Army came next and were threatening Thionville, Metz having already been surrounded. On their right the American VII<sup>th</sup> Army stretched from the Luneville sector to south of Epinal, with the northern Vosges passes in their grasp. Finally, the French I<sup>st</sup> Army, now an extremely formidable force, was advancing on Belfort and the Alsatian territory right up to the Swiss frontier. This compact line of over 400 miles constituted the mobilised positions for an all-in drive on Germany. The most immediate and sensational progress was made by the French, who by November 24 had taken Belfort and

were four miles beyond Mulhouse. Strasbourg was entered on the same day. The Germans were now, in this southern region, in full retreat across the Rhine.

*Plans for the formation of U.N.O.*

Meanwhile the Allied plans for post-war reconstruction were beginning to take shape. U.N.R.R.A., the organization which had been set up for the relief and rehabilitation of the forty-four countries opposed to Hitler, was perhaps the most urgent of these schemes. Its task was formidable. In fighting the trail of hunger and disease which the Nazis left behind them as they fell back on their inner fortress, it was obviously necessary to show that democracy was no less efficient under emergency conditions than the fascist control. The crucial test of U.N.R.R.A. was whether it would be inspired by a sufficiently bold and far-sighted policy to lay the foundations of international economic prosperity so as to become an instrument for breaking down the absurd anomalies of frontier-restrictions and nationalist jealousies which had existed in the past: or whether it would be so snowed under by immediate demands of relief as to miss its ultimate opportunities, or indeed would allow itself to be animated by discrimination between friendly and enemy peoples so as to forget its obligation to sheer humanitarian principles. In this connexion the announcement that the jurisdiction of U.N.R.R.A. did not cover the enemy was not reassuring. The decision that Germany must pay for her food could be criticised not merely on sentimental but on practical grounds. A lack of food is the parent of disease, and disease takes no account of distinction between ally and foe. Already in Italy the situation had become deplorable, for Italy could not pay for assistance. During the summer of 1944 the infant-mortality in Rome was one baby in every two.

The most important post-war scheme, however, emanated from Dumbarton Oaks. During August and September 1944, conversations took place between the representatives of the Allied Powers which eventually produced what were described as 'tentative proposals' for future world-organization. The proposals reproduced certain features of

the League of Nations, with some important differences. There was to be a General Assembly made up of representatives of all 'peace-loving States': a Security Council, on which the U.S.A., Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., China, and 'in due course' France, would have permanent seats with representatives of six other nations to be elected by the General Assembly every two years: an International Court of Justice: and a Secretariat. All States comprising the organization "should undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement and agreements concluded among themselves, armed forces, facilities and assistance necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security." The need of a police-arm for dealing with aggressors who threatened to resort to violence or defied the ruling of this new authority, was therefore recognised. But there was no attempt in this scheme to place this police-arm under definitely international control: it would be made up of the forces of national States, and therefore liable presumably to suffer from the same policy as had been evident in the hesitation of the League, when various member-States had refused to take any part in supplying the necessary machinery for imposing sanctions on Italy at the time of the Abyssinian campaign.

The main weakness of the scheme was its dependence on the agreement of the five Great Powers with permanent seats on the Security Council. The question as to whether decisions of the Council should require an unanimous vote or be reached by majority was left open, as there was disagreement on this issue between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Americans. Obviously it was a vital question, since the Soviet demand that there must be unanimity would mean that any one of the Great Powers or other members of the Council could hold up action against an aggressor, particularly if that member were itself the guilty party: the Soviet insistence that there should be no action unless all members of the Security Council were agreed was obviously inspired by the fear of a capitalist world massed together against Russia. Proviso was also made for an Economic and Social Council, a hopeful feature inasmuch as it suggested the possibility of some international co-operation in those spheres. But the scheme in general was

inspired by a sense of caution, with no attempt to concern itself directly with any move towards actual federation. The proposals seemed, on the contrary, to envisage a prolonged domination of the leading victor-States, which would mean probably the emergence of regional federations built up round each of these States and a perpetuation, accordingly, of rival zones of influence. In November 1944, proposals were indeed launched from various quarters, advocating a close economic union in Western Europe, a bloc in which Britain and France would be the chief partners. It might be that only from these local groupings could a wider European unity emerge. But it was a perilous path, since these national blocs might easily become self-contained spheres and therefore breeding-grounds for war.

In this decisive phase of the war the conference held at Yalta from February 4-11, 1945, between Marshal Stalin, President Roosevelt and Mr Churchill and their Staffs was lent a greater significance than perhaps any previous war-gathering. The occasion was marred by an aeroplane disaster on the eve of the conference, in which several British officials were killed.

In many respects the decisions reached at Yalta were a marked advance on the Teheran consultations, although the conclusions, as was only to be expected, denoted a traditional rather than a revolutionary approach to world-reconstruction and emphasised the importance of strategic frontiers rather than a recognition of the much greater importance of the economic factors. While reaffirming their determination to wipe out all Nazi institutions there was at long-last a message to the enemy civilians: "It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany, but only when Nazism and militarism have been extirpated will there be hope for a decent life for Germans, and a place for them in the comity of nations." Reparation was to be in kind, and thus the fatal mistake of 1919 avoided. A conference of United Nations to consider the Dumbarton Oaks scheme was fixed for April 25, 1945, at San Francisco. The right of all peoples, including the liberated nations, to choose their own form of government was reaffirmed. The Lublin Committee was to be acknowledged as the official Polish Provisional Government, provided it was broadened by the inclusion of democratic leaders. Agreement was also

reached on the issue of the vote taken on the Security Council regarding aggression. In all decisions on major issues concerning international disputes which might lead to war the unanimous vote of the five permanent members of the Council and two of the six temporary members was required: but the parties to a dispute would not be entitled to vote on any proposal to take measures against an aggressor. The effect of this uneasy compromise was, first, to render the permanent members' vote all important, while the small proportion of the temporary members' vote required made it of little consequence—two of the 'temporaries' would override the six if supporting the 'permanents.' A second and more serious consequence was that if one of the permanent members was party to a dispute, that State could hold up all attempts to prevent war. In other words, the smooth working of the Security Council was made entirely dependent not only on the complete agreement of the Big Powers, but on their intentions never themselves to be guilty of aggression or to be involved separately in a dispute.

••The significance of Yalta was its indication of the shape of the peace to come. As a whole it was greeted with approval from all except Nazi quarters. There seemed to be a touch of no mean statesmanship in the Polish solution, the resolving of a position in which the Soviet Union had been recognising the Lublin Committee, while America and Britain maintained relations with the Government in London. Here the more extreme Tory wing in Britain were inevitably dissatisfied. The vexed question of Polish western frontiers was wisely deferred to the time when the peace-treaty would be considered. The chief inharmonious note was struck by General de Gaulle who refused an invitation to meet President Roosevelt, evidently as a protest that France had not been invited to the actual conference. Yet in spite of this general approval, the Yalta reaffirmation of the proposals to set up a new international body aroused no great enthusiasm. No doubt this more sober reception was a symptom of greater realism on the part of the nations which had experienced the tragic failure of the League of Nations scheme: but it was due also to the fact that the Dumbarton Oaks proposals were not of a character to capture popular imagination. The new 'League' was not

a creation which marked any great departure from the previous international order: it promised only a small measure of security beyond that of its predecessor.

The Yalta meeting was followed by conferences in Cairo and Alexandria, where the future of Arab territories was discussed, and at which the Soviet representatives were not present.

### *Political developments in liberated territories*

Those territories which were freed from the Fascist yoke at once began to reflect the deeper conflict between the forces which sought to reimpose the dominance of landlord-ownership and modern big-business commercial interests, as against the revolutionary elements aiming at a new and in most cases a socialist civilization. Invariably it was the reactionary influences which had collaborated with the enemy, as a result of their comparative affinity with Fascist ideals, while the progressives were made up of those who had actively manned the resistance movements. This fundamental division was clearly reflected in Belgium. The *émigré* Government, under M. Pierlot, had counselled in 1940 an abandonment of the struggle against Germany. "We shall not go to England," Pierlot had written in a memorandum to his Cabinet. "France has thrown in her hand. We shall give up the struggle with her. We cannot associate ourselves with a blockade which the London Government will certainly enforce." Although the Belgian Government eventually migrated to London, before leaving Brussels it is said to have appointed five leading financiers and industrialists to "counsel the nation and maintain production," but not to resist the enemy.<sup>1</sup> When Pierlot returned to his country his Government demanded the disarmament of the resistance groups which had carried on the fight against the Nazis and courageously assisted the Allies to drive out the enemy. When this order was made in November a widespread revolt broke out in the capital, resulting in bloodshed. The British forces under General Erskine were instructed to assist Pierlot's unpopular Govern-

<sup>1</sup> This statement was made by *La Dernière Heure* (November 1944), a leading Liberal Belgian newspaper.

ment in compelling disarmament. Communist and some other resistance groups, after consultation with General Erskine, agreed to obey rather than run the risk of civil war. The regrettable feature of this incident was the implication that the resistance movements had helped to free their country only that they might be placed once more under the domination of the financial interests which Pierlot represented, and that the British army had been used to bolster up this reactionary administration. Pierlot's Ministry had made no effort and showed little inclination to take rigorous steps to suppress the black markets and other forms of war-profiteering shamelessly flaunting themselves. In the first week of February 1945, Pierlot announced the resignation of his Government, in view of the general want of confidence which had been expressed.

In France the position seemed to be more favourable. The request of the resistance leaders to be incorporated in the regular army with their own officers was here conceded, although de Gaulle ordered the demobilization of the 'patriotic militia.' The National Council of Resistance at first expressed unanimous opposition to this regulation, but de Gaulle received a delegation from the Council and promised that the co-operation of the militia would be welcomed and that members should receive training to enable them to help effectually in the defence of the country. Darnand's 'Fifth Column' pro-Vichy organization was still carrying on an underground campaign, attempting to imitate the former tactics of the patriots, and there were also German agents hidden in many French towns. But here, unlike Belgium, the Government was vigorously rounding up the traitors and bringing them to trial. Moreover, the Left was making strong efforts to bring about complete progressive unity, even to the extent of linking up the Christian Democrats and the Communists. The Socialist Congress held at Paris in November was a hopeful manifestation of the determination of young Frenchmen to rebuild their country on sounder foundations.

In the United States President Roosevelt was returned, with a big majority over his opponent, for the fourth time. The vote was a demonstration that the American electors were determined that continuity in foreign policy and the war-effort should be maintained.



The approach of the Red Army to the frontiers of Slovakia led to a remarkable but brief outbreak of the revolution in that territory. On August 29, 1944, Catlos, the Minister of Defence, broadcast to the nation the news that the Government had decided to appeal for the protection of the German army against the 'Bolshevik menace.' Instantly the whole nation rose in protest. The insurgent forces took charge and the regular army also joined the rebels. The Government itself came over to the resistance-camp, including Catlos, who, it appeared, had only broadcast the proclamation under Nazi compulsion and had been working secretly with the patriots. The Slovak National Committee was revealed to be predominantly Communist and Social Democrat, and, although the majority of Slovaks are probably Conservative and Catholic, they expressed full and enthusiastic approval of the Committee's programme. This programme broadly advocated union with the Czechs on a pre-Munich basis and close cultural relations with the Soviet Republic, coupled with an evident suspicion of the *émigré* Czechoslovakian Government in London. The temporary failure of the Red Army to continue its advance led to the suppression of the rising, an occupation of Nazi troops and a change of Government. The rising proved premature, but the results were not so tragic in the toll of human slaughter as had been the attempt in Warsaw. When the Soviet advance was resumed at the close of 1944 the policy of Moscow towards the Czechoslovakian Government became more emphatic. Ruthenia was encouraged to seek incorporation in the Soviet Union. Dr Benes' Ministry was pressed to recognise the Lublin Committee in Poland and was invited to leave London and take up its residence in liberated territory. In a broadcast to his country, given on Christmas Eve, Dr Benes announced that he would favour a decentralised system in the resettlement, in which Slovak, Ukrainian and Czech administrations would be set up in the respective provinces.

In Finland the armistice with Russia signed on September 4 led to the formation of a new Government on November 17 containing for the first time a Communist member. It was probably more representative of popular opinion than any previous Ministry, though the pro-German elements, represented by Tanner, were still active.

In Italy the political situation had become increasingly unstable. In the main the divisions centred round the plea of the Christian Democrat Party that all questions of 'local policy' should be dropped and the national energy devoted to the task of reconstructing order out of the chaos. The Communists and other Left bodies, on the contrary, urged that no real reconstruction was possible until the Fascist and near-Fascist collaborationist elements were rooted out far more radically than had as yet been done. The case for the Italian Left was stated by Nenni, the Socialist leader, in *Avanti*. "We trace the cause of the disaffection in the country," he wrote, "... to the fact that the Government is checked in its actions by Conservative forces which are objectively playing the game of reaction. . . . We have accused the police and the Carabinieri of being in their leading cadres still infected by the Fascist spirit. It is not, in truth, with the loyal pledge of silence that one can serve the cause of democracy in Italy but by facing the problems and hastening their solution." In November 1944, Bonomi resigned the premiership, but was subsequently induced by the Crown Prince to remain in office and form a new Government. Mr Eden's subsequent admission in the House of Commons, that the British Government had objected to the inclusion of Count Sforza in the Italian Cabinet, was an unpleasant reminder that British interference in the political affairs of these liberated territories was certainly no less conspicuous than that of the Soviet Union in the Baltic and Balkan States. America at once repudiated any share in this pressure, and gave as sharp a reproof of British foreign policy as had as yet issued from the State Department. Count Sforza uttered a vigorous denial of the criticisms levelled against him by Mr Churchill in the House of Commons. Apparently Mr Churchill's main charge was that he had refused, on returning to Italy, to support Badoglio.

The Warsaw disaster and the deeply rooted belief that Moscow had been responsible for encouraging and then failing to support the rising still dominated Polish-Soviet relations. The pro-Soviet Lublin Committee continued to attack the London Polish Government. There had been hopes earlier in the autumn that Mikolajczyk's efforts to effect a co-operation with Stalin might prove successful. In

November 1944, however, he resigned, and the new Government represented a hardening of anti-Soviet sentiment. Although both Britain and the U.S.A. continued to recognise the legal status of this Government, there could be little doubt that its bitter hostility towards the Power which had rescued Poland from Nazi domination was a political attitude which none of the Allies could afford to tolerate. Meanwhile, the Lublin Committee, now recognised by Moscow as the legitimate Polish Government, was almost equally uncompromising and aggressive in its attitude. On several occasions, for example, the President, Boleslav Bierut, accused the Polish Home Army of actual collaboration with the Germans. On February 5, 1945, he announced that his representatives were already setting up civil administration in liberated Upper Silesia, before, that is, any formal decision had been taken by the Allies to hand this region over to Poland.

It was evident that the Franco Government in Spain was seriously alarmed by the course of events, by the defeat of the Axis on whose triumph it had relied, by the effect of the Soviet victories on European opinion, and by the revival of Left activities in Spain itself. The Republican Congress held during November 1944 in Toulouse was a growing indication of Spanish democratic activity. The Congress was made up of various parties, from Liberal to Communist, and expressed a considerable political unity. In spite of Mr Churchill's remarkable and somewhat unfortunate tribute to General Franco, in that speech delivered earlier in the summer of 1944 to which reference has already been made, Allied opinion was not persuaded in Franco's favour. His sympathies, expressed in various messages of congratulation to Hitler, the presence of a Blue Division of Spanish Fascists mobilised by the Government in order to fight Russia, his contemptuous and hostile references to the Allied cause, could not be forgotten. Franco, however, on November 4 protested his entire neutrality and pleaded that Spain, as a neutral, should be represented at the peace-conference. This request was turned down by the British Government without comment. The Franco administration could only hope, indeed, to retain control of Spain by the continued forcible suppression of the Republican elements. On Franco's own admission 160,000 political prisoners were

still held in Spanish gaols, and the number of those who had been killed and had died from brutal ill-treatment could hardly be estimated.

This general picture of a world beginning to emerge from the grip of totalitarian war will serve as a reminder that it was vain to expect an immediate restoration of settled conditions once the fighting was over. The war was clearly but one phase of an immense world-convulsion, the effects of which would be evident for a long period to come. Still more directly does the picture reveal that the war, as we have already had occasion to remark, was becoming by 1944 much more a struggle between re-action and progress in their various forms than a war between two national groups, the Axis and the Allies. In each country the forces which either by underground methods or in open organised warfare had been the active elements against the Nazis were forces animated by strong political motives and committed to a radical or socialist programme. When freed of the foreign enemy they continued the struggle against their own reactionaries, and it was significant that they identified this struggle as part of the same conflict. The interests in each land which sought to preserve the old capitalist order had tended to collaborate with the Fascist enemy, either actively or in passive acquiescence. Even in Britain, where the course of events had dictated unity of Right and Left in the cause of national survival as against the threat of Nazi invasion, we have seen that pre-war Conservative policy had aimed at appeasing Hitler rather than of forming an alliance with Soviet or other elements which might have precipitated revolutionary developments. Had Britain's fate been that of France it is probable that the Conservative ranks, the financier-industrialists and the possessory classes, would have furnished the means for setting up a Vichy type of Government. The pattern of world-development was becoming increasingly consistent. The core of resistance to the Fascist menace had expressed itself, whenever it was free to do so, in movements markedly to the Left. The price which British Conservatism was compelled to pay for whole-hearted co-operation with the Soviet Union was to consent to the introduction of social legislation, such as that represented by the Beveridge Scheme. In general, we can trace the underlying influences, released

by the world-crisis, as the challenge of a new to the old civilization. Hitler accurately proclaimed himself as the bulwark against Bolshevism, which, on a wider interpretation, stood as the symbol of progressive change. While the older civilization could only survive in the modern age by buttressing itself in some type of Fascist rule, democracy could only survive if it was willing to move forward in a Leftward direction.

### *Unsettlement in Greece*

Nowhere was the cleavage between Left and Right more accentuated than in Greece. Even while the Germans were in occupation, fighting on a serious scale had broken out between the guerilla forces of the rival political factions. The Right was represented in the military field by the EDES, led by General Zervas, and by the EKKA, which was subsequently disbanded: EDES, the larger of the two, numbered about 3,000 men. The Left organization was known as EAM (National Liberation Front) and included Agrarians, Socialists, Liberal Youth groups and various trade-union federations: it was reckoned as representing nine-tenths of the electorate, while its military contingent, the ELAS, had enlisted some 50,000 armed men, with three times that number of reservists. The EAM 'popular front' had come into existence largely for the purpose of resisting any attempt to reimpose a regime of the detested Metaxas dictatorship, its colour being strongly republican on account of the King's supposed affinities with the pro-dictatorship interests. The survivors of the Metaxas regime had supplied the quislings and the collaborators under enemy rule, and it is significant of the King's unpopularity that even in the ranks of the Right there were definite anti-monarchical trends of opinion.

The Greek situation cannot be understood unless this widespread opposition to the Metaxas tradition is appreciated, as also the fact that the Left was convinced that an attempt would be made to reinstate the dictatorship under cover of the arms of the liberating Power. At the Teheran meeting, it had been agreed that Britain should be the liberating Power, and that Greece, accordingly, should fall within the

British 'sphere of influence.' It was, therefore, particularly essential that British policy in this uneasy situation should be scrupulously neutral. Unfortunately, there is evidence which suggests that both Mr Churchill and Mr Leeper—the British Ambassador—were not only inclined during the pre-liberation period to champion the claims of the King but had from the first misjudged the real status of EAM. They seem to have assumed that the EAM represented merely a minority of revolutionary extremists who were out to seize control for their own ends. They failed to realise that this federation of the Left included all grades of democratic sentiment, that it was supported actively not only by artisans and peasants but by men of such calibre as Professor Svolos: and that the ELAS, far from being an irresponsible rabble, was a trained and highly disciplined contingent, drawn from and in control of the major portion of Greece. As early as the spring of 1944 the British Government had virtually ceased to furnish the EAM with arms, while continuing to supply the small Right forces. In the summer of that year Mr Churchill instructed the B.B.C. to refer as little as possible to the part which ELAS was playing in ridding the country of the enemy.

The Greek Government which the British brought to Athens in October 1944 was headed by Papandreou, a statesman who had shown a marked animosity against EAM at the Lebanon Conference, which had been held some months previously in order to promote Greek political unity. This provincial Government was a coalition of Right and Left, though EAM were given only six of the twenty-two Cabinet seats. Papandreou's appointment as Premier was due to British influence, and the balance of representation in the Cabinet between Left and Right was certainly not calculated to allay EAM suspicions. The EAM, however, agreed to co-operate, as obviously a properly democratic Government could only be formed when normal conditions were sufficiently restored to render feasible the holding of a general election. Almost at once the Greek Government was faced with the question of the disarming of the resistance contingents. The EAM representatives concurred in the proposal that all guerilla forces should be disbanded, without any discrimination between Left and Right, and should be replaced by a regular army for which

three new classes should be called up. At this critical moment the Mountain Brigade and the Second Battalion, two royalist units, were recalled to Greece, and to their consternation the EAM Ministers were informed by the Premier that the British had insisted that these two units should remain armed and should be drafted into the new army. It must not be forgotten that the EAM was nervously on the alert to detect any sign that the Right were attempting to double-cross them: this information appeared to be a confirmation of their fears. The EAM then proposed, on November 30, that if these two units were to remain mobilised a corresponding proportion of the ELAS and EDES should be incorporated in the army. Early on Friday morning, December 1, General Scobie, the Commander of the British forces, caused a leaflet to be dropped over Athens announcing that all guerilla contingents must be disbanded. The implication of this order could only be taken to mean that, while the Left were to hand in their arms, the two extreme Right formations were to remain armed, not being classified as guerillas. The EAM accordingly demanded that all existing fighting units should be disbanded, whether guerilla or regular. The Government rejected this demand and the EAM Ministers resigned.

It is difficult to discover any grounds to support the view that, even at this stage, the EAM intended to resort to violent resistance. They called a strike, and a public demonstration was arranged in Athens to protest against what the Left considered to be a gross betrayal. The police opened fire on the demonstrators and several persons were killed and wounded. In an already explosive atmosphere this act of provocation was sufficient to open the flood-gates of civil war, with the consequence that the real issue was comparatively obscured. The EAM, in fact, incurred the penalty which besets all bodies which find themselves in rebellion against authority: they excite the odium of those who do not trouble to look for the causes of the conflict below the surface. The real issue was that the Greek Government, though able to pose as defender of law and order, had actually precipitated the conflict by its partisan policy: and, still more serious from the British standpoint, that the British forces had been manœuvred into a position of actively abetting a partisan Government against those

who had lately proved themselves to be particularly loyal and gallant allies against the enemy.

Once civil war had started a spate of controversy, not only in Greece but in Britain and America, was let loose. *The Times* severely criticised the British handling of the affair, meetings and demonstrations were held in many parts of England and Scotland to protest against the British Government's attitude. Not the least regrettable feature of these deplorable developments was that the British case was supported by propaganda, much of which was ultimately found to be both unscrupulous and untrue. A letter vindicating the British standpoint, and purporting to be signed by several leading Greek trade-unionists, received widespread publicity in the British press: it was subsequently discovered that not one of these signatories was a recognised trade-unionist, while one of them had even been working for Hitler in Berlin. A British newspaper-correspondent drew attention to the quantity of German weapons which were being used by the ELAS, and presented this as proof that the ELAS revolt was being equipped by the Nazis: these weapons had actually been captured by the ELAS in their struggle against the common foe. During a heated debate in the House of Commons on December 8, Mr Churchill described the ELAS as having established a reign of terror, and advanced as one of his indictments against them the assertion that they had refused on any terms to surrender the hostages which they had taken. Yet, several days before this debate, the ELAS had already begun to release a stream of hostages. Mr Eden subsequently admitted that this was so, but explained that the British Government had not been aware of this fact at the time of the debate. Mr Churchill did not apologise, however, for his mis-statement.

The Greek situation had become so serious, and popular criticism of the British Government both in British and American quarters so considerable, that on Christmas Day, 1944, Mr Churchill and Mr Eden suddenly appeared in Athens to summon an all-party conference for a settlement of the disputes. No attempt was made to secure an armistice during the proceedings, and, apart from the appointment of the venerable Archbishop of Athens as Regent, the negotiations proved abortive. The British Government



found it necessary to exercise pressure on the Greek King to obtain his consent to the regency.

In at least one instance the British Command took a fair and essentially neutral decision. The notorious 'X' organization, which was definitely Fascist in composition and included many collaborators in its ranks, attempted to join up with the British forces against the EAM. General Scobie, with commendable promptitude, refused this offer of help and disarmed the body.

Papandreou resigned on December 31, and a new Government was formed under General Plastiras. Plastiras showed himself no more amenable to EAM claims than his predecessor, and indeed threatened that reprisals would be taken even when a settlement was reached. In January 1945, Sir Walter Citrine headed a trade-union delegation to report on the situation, but the report was of little relevance. It dealt merely with surface evidence and failed to take underlying political issues into account. Thus, it emphasised the disgust felt by British troops at the atrocities which they had witnessed and which were said to have been perpetuated by the EAM: it is proper that disgust should be aroused by such incidents, but unfortunately atrocities are not an unfamiliar feature in a corner of Europe which has been subjected for years to Turkish oppression. Sir Walter was impressed by the gratitude expressed by Athenian civilians for the protection offered by British arms: but this was evidence only that a hungry and war-weary population would welcome a cessation of hostilities on almost any terms. Not a few of the citizens openly announced that at the forthcoming election they would vote for the King's party, not because they had any monarchical sympathies but because they understood that the British favoured the King and that such a vote would accordingly speed up British supplies.

Peace was nominally restored by the middle of February 1945, British influence having urged that the Greek Government should employ no reprisal measures against the EAM; and when Mr Churchill and Mr Eden paid a second flying visit to Athens on their return from Yalta they were greeted by a slightly improved situation. Had British policy been directed from the first to restrain the Greek Government from partisan action this deplorable

episode need never have occurred. But, once again, the Churchillian impulsive vigour, which had proved so stimulating a tonic at the Dunkirk crisis, revealed itself as an extremely dangerous and biased influence when dealing with a delicate diplomatic problem. Recklessly to assume that one of the parties to a political dispute is a band of undisciplined terrorists is hardly likely to produce any permanent or just settlement. The effect of the British Government's policy was seen in 1945, when an extreme royalist Right-wing Government was able to replace Plastiras, mainly because of the Greek conviction that a ministry of this political colouring would meet with British approval. The most that could be hoped was that the Greek fiasco would serve as an object-lesson to the Allies how not to act in similar situations. Not only in Greece, but whenever nations were liberated, popular resistance movements, which had borne the brunt of the fight against the enemy, found themselves confronted by forces seeking to reimpose the power of industrial and propertied interests. Nothing could be more deplorable than the prospect of Allied armed and diplomatic force being used to suppress, directly or indirectly, these popular revolutions. The British policy in Greece was a sinister indication of what might be expected in the post-war period.

### *The last German counter-attack*

The closing weeks of 1944 saw little improvement of the Allied position on the Western front. On the contrary the initiative had suddenly passed to the enemy. On December 16, Marshal von Rundstedt, profiting by the fog which neutralised the Allied aerial superiority, launched an offensive on the Ardennes sector. That he was able to strike so serious a blow was a grave reflection on American staff-work. The warnings of British Intelligence that the enemy were massing large forces on this front were disregarded, and General Eisenhower was caught napping. Rundstedt was able to advance over the very ground where the Germans had broken through in 1940. An underestimate of the German strength had undoubtedly led the

American Command to disperse its troops too widely over the Western line. Too little consideration had been allowed for the extraordinary skill and bravery of the enemy, his ability to select the right moment and place for counter-attack, and the fact that the Allied diplomacy of 'unconditional surrender' had successfully mobilised the German people to fight on, inasmuch as no alternative appeared to be offered them. The price of this policy was a prolongation of the war and the sacrifice of an additional number of human lives.

Marshal Model, Rundstedt's army Group-Commander, advanced on December 16, 1944, between the Meuse and the Moselle. By the 19th he had isolated Bastogne: next day he had reached St Hubert and Laroché. On the 21st he had compelled the American VIIth Armoured Division to withdraw from St Vith.

In this awkward situation General Eisenhower regrouped his armies, and placed the American Ist and IXth Armies under Field-Marshal Montgomery's command. British advance troops had reached the bridges over the Meuse by Dinant, and Patton's IIIrd Army had begun to threaten the enemy's southern flank. On the 27th Patton had relieved Bastogne. On January 3rd Hodges' Ist Army began to drive against the northern edge of Model's salient. But Patton, confronted by thirteen of Model's twenty-three divisions, was now on the defensive with the result that Hodges had to carry out a lone offensive under weather conditions which could hardly have been more unfavourable.

The most disturbing feature of this situation was the fact that the enemy still had power to take the offensive. Having seized his advantage Rundstedt was able to keep the Allies guessing as to where his next attacks would be launched and thus temporarily to check a further Allied offensive. On December 31 the enemy launched attacks on the Saar and in the Lower Vosges. Civilians began to evacuate Strasbourg. By January 5, 1945, the Germans were able to claim that in the Vosges they had broken through the Maginot Line on a front of twenty-five miles. In the Ardennes they had driven in a wedge of some forty miles in depth, the width of which was gradually narrowed at some points to eleven miles. That the enemy was held and the situation to some extent retrieved was due to the

magnificent courage and energy of the American and British soldiers.

By the end of January 1945, the Allies had almost completely recovered their previous positions. They were now ready for a major offensive against the Siegfried Line and the approaches to Cologne. Rundstedt's initiative had proved a costly undertaking, resulting in the loss of over 120,000 men and half his equipment, as against an Allied loss of 55,000 men. In a larger perspective, however, the Ardennes thrust had been worth while. It was aimed at preventing a serious Allied threat to western German defences at the very moment when the Red Army were striking on the eastern frontiers with such sensational success. It had, in fact, thrown back the Allied time-table and accordingly enabled the Germans to withdraw their Vth and VIth Panzer Divisions for use in a counter-attack against the Russian advance. Yet it could do no more than delay the approaching German doom. In February General Eisenhower had begun to launch his forces on the final and stupendous onslaught.

## CHAPTER 14

### FINAL VICTORY

#### *The Allies cross the Rhine*

THOSE who had remained sceptical of the theory that the air-attacks on Germany could in itself prove the decisive factor were in no doubt as to their contributory value. During 1944 the Allied operations had intensified to a degree with which the imagination can rarely grapple. One million three hundred and ninety-five thousand tons of bombs had been dropped by the R.A.F. and the American Strategic Air Force. The American air forces based in England and Italy had dropped 870,900 tons and destroyed 15,318 enemy planes with a total loss to themselves of 9,274 aircraft. Supplies, communications, factories, oil plants, big towns and cities were subjected to incessant assault. The Luftwaffe, by the time of the final offensive, was almost driven out of the air. By the middle of March 1945, the whole Ruhr district, as a result of the bombing, had been completely isolated by the destruction of viaducts, bridges and railway junctions. Krupp's works had been wrecked beyond repair. So devastated was the area occupied by the XXIst German Army Group that Marshal Kesselring found it almost impossible to make the necessary dispositions to meet Montgomery's advance.

The first raid over Berlin had taken place on the night of August 25, 1940: the last R.A.F. bomb was dropped at 01.32 on Saturday morning, April 21, 1945. Between and including these two dates 68,326 tons of high explosives and incendiaries had been unloaded on the German capital. There had been 282 bombing raids by British and American aircraft, of which 264 were carried out exclusively by British aircraft, 326 important factories and 20 Government departments in the city were destroyed or severely damaged, while 7 gas-works and 3 power-plants were put out of action.

Air-attack on this colossal scale effectively contributed to the Allied victory as artillery preparation. But the armies were still faced with the main task. At first Allied progress

was slow on all sectors and the offensive appeared to be assuming no dramatic dimensions. In the north the Canadian 1st Army, after taking Calcar and Udem, found themselves confronted in the Hochwald, and particularly east of Udem, with formidable opposition. It took four weeks of continual fighting to reach the Rhine in this sector. Round the Wesel bend of the river the Germans had massed an immense number of guns and mortars. The battle was fierce and deadly, but on March 9 the two bridges at Wesel were blown up and the enemy were retreating eastward at full speed.

Meanwhile, the American 1st Army had driven through the Hambach Forest and on February 27 had crossed the river Erft at Modrath, only seven miles from Cologne. On March 4 the outskirts of Cologne were reached, and on the following day the city was taken, the first big capture in the new offensive. Here the Allies were confronted with evidence of the scale of destruction which their air-forces had wrought. Much of the city was in ruins, the civilians dazed and supine from their terrible ordeal. The famous cathedral had, however, been spared to a degree which is a witness to the accuracy of the bombers. It had suffered from blast but was not irreparably damaged.

Most military prophets, professional as well as amateur, had expected that the broad expanse of the Rhine would prove a natural barrier which would involve a long hold-up. The Allied forces spread out towards Bonn and Godesberg, both of these towns being captured on March 9. The IIIrd American Army reached the river-banks north-west of Coblenz on March 6, having completed a sixty-mile advance across the Eifel plateau in fifty-eight hours. Two days later a junction was made with the 1st Army, thus encircling the German VIIth Army Group. By the end of the first week in March, 70,000 prisoners had been taken in the Rhineland campaign, making a total of over a million captures since D-day.

But the passage across the Rhine itself was carried far more rapidly than the prophets had dared to hope. One of the contributory causes to this success was a German blunder in failing completely to destroy the bridge at Remagen. The 1st Army made full use of the unexpected prize, and, though the middle-span collapsed on March 17,

by this time the advancing troops were no longer dependent on it. It was repaired within two days. The crossing of the Rhine was in fact a triumph of good organization, bravery and efficiency. Perhaps the highest tribute should be paid to the work of the engineers. Within eighty-four hours of the launching of the first assault-craft no less than eight bridges had been erected over the river. One of these was completed in the record time of six and a half hours.

General Eisenhower told a press-conference on March 27 that in his view the Germans had made a serious mistake in attempting to make a stand on the Saar. He was confident that now they were a whipped army incapable of employing enough strength to stop the Allies anywhere. Certainly there was already evidence that all effective resistance was crumbling. By the end of March the British II<sup>nd</sup> Army had eight bridgeheads and the IX<sup>th</sup> American Army seven. The I<sup>st</sup> Army was now sixty miles east of the Rhine. III<sup>rd</sup> Army tanks were twenty-five miles beyond Wurzburg, fighting was taking place within Frankfurt, and the VII<sup>th</sup> Army had crossed the Rhine north of Mannheim. In all sectors except the north the advance was rigorously maintained. But here, around Arnhem and throughout eastern Holland, the Germans had concentrated their best troops, and the Allied Command was hesitant to precipitate a decision lest, in doing so, Holland should be flooded and wrecked still further by the enemy and the already appalling privations of the inhabitants intensified.

But, even here, there was no permanent halt. The Canadians by the first two weeks of April were clearing the enemy out of their positions east of the Zuider Zee. One result of this threat to the German pocket was to put an end to the V-2 menace over the Home Counties. Relief from this threat had come at last after a period of ten months, dating back to the first V-1 onslaught in June 1944.

### *The horror of the concentration-camps*

In the penultimate phase of the war it is difficult to keep pace with the chain of Allied victories. So rapidly had the situation changed that by the middle of April only a small part of Germany remained in Nazi hands. The Allied line

ran from the south at Basle to Strasbourg in a straight line. But here the tide of the advance began to creep in towards Stuttgart and Nuremberg. Continuing our survey (April 18) we find Bayreuth in Allied hands, while from Leipzig, which fell on April 19, the strip of enemy-held territory was at its narrowest, the Red Army already posted before Gorlitz, so that Dresden was little more than thirty miles distant from the Allies to the west or east. Hardly wider was the stretch on the Berlin line. Osnabruck, Minden, Hanover and Brunswick were already passed by the Anglo-American advance. Thence the enemy territory stretched west to Emden and the Elbe, so that in this sector the Allied forces were attacking northwards. The Allies, however, by now were in occupation of eastern Holland up to the coast beyond Groningen and Leeuwarden, the Germans in western Holland now being completely cut off. A much smaller German pocket survived round Düsseldorf, and there were still the French ports on the Atlantic, such as Bordeaux, in enemy occupation, as well as the long-suffering Channel Islands, from which the German garrisons were unable to escape.

In their spectacular advance the Americans, British and other Allied forces were able to free not only large numbers of prisoners-of-war, but also such notorious concentration-camps as Buchenwald. Here appalling evidence met them of Nazi atrocity and torture. Heaps of unburied dead bodies and the bodies—just alive—of emaciated victims, children as well as men and women, presented a horrible spectacle of the cruelty of the Nazi regime. The remains of two thousand foreign workers were found in a concentration-camp near Nordhausen. Very wisely the American officers ordered German civilians, male and female, to be escorted by military police to Buchenwald to see for themselves this dreadful witness of the results of Nazi atrocity. In this respect the German people will never be able to maintain that the stories of Nazi guilt are an Allied invention. Some of the worst criminals, such as S.S. Josef Kramer, commandant of the death-camp of Belsen, were captured. At Langenstein camp only 1,100 remained alive out of 6,000, the average life in that hell-spot being three months. When the camp was freed the survivors were found to be living skeletons covered with running sores. Many of these



were too weakened to be saved from death, even though proper medical treatment was immediately given them. Many who could be saved would be invalidated for the rest of their lives. Delegations were sent from the British House of Commons and from various of the United Nations to see for themselves the bestial conditions before the Buchenwald camp was finally cleared of its fearful evidence. German labour was used to carry out this work of clearance and bury the hundreds of dead bodies. When Dachau was taken a few days later 32,000 prisoners were liberated and fifty railway trucks were found, crammed with dead bodies. The torture chambers were intact. In each hut, built for fifty inmates, 200 had been compelled to sleep. At Buchenwald the story that the Commandant's wife had had ornaments made of the human skin of some of the prisoners could not be dismissed as unfounded. Some of the pieces of hide taken back by the parliamentary delegation were identified by Sir Bernard Spilsbury as human skin and clearly formed part of a lampshade.

It is no exaggeration to claim that never before in modern history has the world been so appalled by the crimes against humanity now for the first time openly disclosed. But it cannot be forgotten that among those who were most anxious to pin the guilt of these diabolical atrocities on the whole German nation were many, including prominent British statesmen, who had coquetted with the foul system which had produced these horrors, and who had once approved of Hitler and dismissed as partisan Left propaganda the reports as to what was happening in these camps, reports which were being freely publicised as early as 1933.

By the middle of April 1945, the German Command had clearly lost control over its forces. Enemy resistance was still active in certain areas, but was becoming disintegrated into a number of isolated pockets. British tanks were closing on Harburg, on the south bank of the Elbe, opposite Hamburg, on the 20th. Progress was being made towards Emden, on the west. Bremen, after a week's strenuous fighting, was taken by the British II<sup>nd</sup> Army on the 26th. The American III<sup>rd</sup> and VIII<sup>th</sup> Armies were already across the Danube in full force, driving through southern Germany to threaten the Nazi redoubt. Eger was captured, also on the 26th. French troops had occupied

Constance, and American forces were at Ingolstadt, only forty miles north of Munich.

Although the Western Allies did not make contact with Soviet troops until April 27, when the American 69th Division (1st Army) met Soviet troops of the 1st Ukrainian Command at Torgau on the Elbe, forty miles north-east of Leipzig, Germany was already virtually cut in two. Only a narrow corridor from Berlin to Dresden separated the two Allied vanguards, and this was rapidly closing in. The sudden collapse of the enemy, once the rot had set in, presented the Allies with immense problems. Thousands of combatants were taken prisoner each day, while a whole civilian population fell under Allied control. Except in the few areas where the Nazi command still held, the morale of the nation had broken. Contrary to Goebbels' orders white flags hung from many of the windows. Most of the towns and cities surrendered without any attempt at sabotage; sniping or any last-moment desperate resistance was rarely encountered. The Allies found themselves confronted in the main by a people fatalistically resigned to defeat, cowed by the intensity of bombardment, and apparently surprised to find that they were regarded as in any degree guilty of having helped to precipitate an aggressive war. General Eisenhower had issued strict orders against fraternization, but it soon became clear that in practice this would create conditions intolerable to soldiers of a prolonged occupation. Local administration had to be carried on by the German municipal authorities, and in this vast area some co-operative relationship with the civilians was inevitable. The general experience of the invading troops was that there was a fundamental distinction to be drawn between the Nazi enthusiasts and the mass of the people. Nazi influence had spread less widely than some commentators had anticipated. In the Soviet zone, after the armistice, an entirely different and more positive policy was adopted. Places of entertainment were opened, non-Nazi German broadcasting was started, and contacts between the troops and the civilians were encouraged.

The British Commando Brigade and the 15th Scottish (Lowland) Division crossed the Elbe early in the morning of April 29, and captured Lauenburg, much as Wesel had

been captured in the Rhine campaign : buffalo craft carried the troops over the river to form a bridgehead. Bombers were not used, owing to unfavourable weather, and the attacking forces were not therefore impeded by the big craters made by their own aircraft, as they had been in the earlier adventure. When the left bank was reached many white flags were seen waving from the houses opposite. General Dempsey inquired through a megaphone the meaning of these truce-signals and was told that they were mounted only by civilians and that the garrison meant to fight on. Even so, Captain Joe Lawrence was ferried across in a German motor-boat to advise surrender in view of the hopeless odds. He spent over three hours in the enemy camp and was then sent back to report that the fortress would hold out to the last. After heavy shelling and a surprise Commando attack the town was soon taken, and the British formed their bridgehead and continued their advance.

Hamburg for the moment was bye-passed, and British tanks swept onwards in a north-easterly direction towards the coast and the Soviet forces. Had a direct attack been launched on the great port enemy resistance, even in the opening days of May 1945, might have been considerable. But, even here, the resistance could not have been long sustained, for by now practically all communications between the various German units were severed, and the war had become no more than a series of sieges. In this last phase the struggle had in fact taken the pattern of widely separated pockets. Norway and Denmark were still in enemy possession.

Holland was, however, the most direct sufferer from the scourges of war. The Germans had screened themselves from an Allied entry by flooding the country with sea-water and thus damaging the soil so severely as to aggravate the food-problem for some time to come. The Dutch population were reduced to the verge of actual starvation. At the end of April, by agreement with the German Command, Allied aircraft flew over the country at low height, dropping parcels of food at certain pre-arranged centres. But this could be at most a partial relief and the Allied Command were criticised in some quarters for their decision to bye-pass Holland in their drive to the Baltic. The reason for the

military decision is that a sufficient deviation of troops into Holland would have very seriously delayed the final defeat of the enemy: and, further, that an invasion of Holland would have almost certainly provoked counter-measures on the part of the Germans, resulting in an even greater ordeal for the Dutch population.

### *The Battle of Berlin*

We must now turn to the eastern half of the picture and consider the part played by the Soviet armies in the final German defeat. To do so it is well to construct a mental map, showing the enormous area covered by the Russians once the tide of battle had turned against the enemy. In general we should think of three main lines of advance. The most northerly may be said to have had the Moscow sector as its source, the advance beginning in March 1943. We can trace this line to Smolensk (captured September 1943), Minsk (July 1944), a branch-line curving north to the East Prussian coast with Königsberg as its objective (April 1945), Warsaw (January 1945), and a division into two lines, one leading towards Berlin, the other to the Americans at Torgau, with a branch-line curving down to the Czech frontier. There is also a northerly branch-line across the Oder and through Stettin (April 26, 1945).

The second line starts from before Voronezh (January 1943) and runs through Kiev (November 1943) to Cracow (January 1945) and on into Slovakia.

The third line commences at Stalingrad (February 1943), crosses the Dnieper (October 1943), the Bug and Dniester rivers (March 1944), into Rumania and on to Budapest (February 1945), leading to Vienna (April 1945) and farther up the Danube.

To complete the map we should sketch in the advances in the west, consisting also of three lines. The first starts from Normandy (June 1944) and leads to Brussels (September 1944), across the lower Rhine (March 1945) to Hamburg, and thus moving towards the Stettin branch-line of the Red Army.

The second line also starts from Normandy and leads

to Paris (August 1944) dividing into three branches, one through Cologne (March 1945) and towards a point south-west of Berlin, the second to Torgau, and the third across the upper Rhine towards Prague.

The third line starts from the south of France and runs north, one branch leading to Basle and Constance, and the other through Nuremberg to Munich (April 28, 1945) and leading on towards the Danube and the Soviet third line.

It had been agreed at Yalta that the biggest prize of the war, the capture of the German capital, should be left entirely to the Red Army. Marshal Zhukov from the north and Marshal Koniev from the south advanced from the positions where they had temporarily been halted and in ten days were entering the outer suburbs of Berlin. Here the Nazis had announced that they would fight to the last. Every street was to become a battlefield, every yard of the Soviet invasion was to be contested. There was to be no surrender. The best German troops, supplies and heavy armament were rushed up by the few roads still open to the capital, these roads becoming so congested that they proved an easy target for incessant bombing attack. Thousands of civilians who had not abandoned the city retired to underground cellars, furnishing themselves with food and drink to endure the terror in such shelter as could be provided.

The battle of Berlin almost defies description. Bombing, shelling, infantry attacks and tanks produced an inferno on a scale which mankind had never before witnessed. It was as if the capital had become a titanic volcano. Curtains of flame rising from the burning buildings enveloped the inner citadel. The enemy made use of the underground railway, and, as the Soviet forces pressed forward they would find themselves suddenly attacked from the rear by German contingents switched from other districts and suddenly emerging from the exits. The Russians found it necessary therefore to seize the key-stations in order to frustrate this tactic. This was indeed a new and grim type of warfare, shells roaring through the deep tunnels and Russian troops moving into the darkness along the tracks, blazing away with machine- and tommy-guns. Here and there the Soviet troops met with local set-backs, but their advance could not be stemmed. By May Day, 1945, the Red Flag was flying over the site of the Reichstag and no possibility

remained of the Nazis maintaining a redoubt under the Tiergarten as a centre for prolonged resistance.

Most of the chief stations and buildings were already in Soviet hands. In this strange and terrible conflict the utmost confusion prevailed. Desperate Nazis would defend blocks of flats, storey by storey, until at last the whole building was destroyed. Other troops donned civilian dress and threw away their arms. More than 40,000 deserters were found hiding in cellars and ruins. Court-yards were piled thick with discarded S.S. insignia. In some quarters shops were even re-opened and civilians were returning from the outskirts into those parts of the city now in Soviet occupation. These civilians here, as elsewhere, proved docile, and the Red Army attitude to them was scrupulously correct. Notices in German were posted up, informing them that they had nothing to fear if they would carry out the instructions addressed them. There were, of course, occasional acts of treachery and also a wide-spread epidemic of suicide among the more desperate and panic-ridden elements.

### *The Conference of United Nations*

It was in this atmosphere of totalitarian victory and of (premature) rumours of surrender that the Conference of United Nations met at San Francisco on April 25, 1945. On no previous meeting of representatives of the world had greater issues depended. Nothing less than the survival of humanity was at stake. Either the nations would agree to set up an order which might prove effective in restraining future aggression and so of holding out a reasonable possibility of security, or they must face the prospect of a third war waged with the sinister apparatus of long-distance shells which would place America in artillery range of Europe and destroy civilization on a scale rendering recovery a matter of grave doubt.

Despite the hourly news of fresh victories the conference met under a shadow. On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt had succumbed to cerebral hæmorrhage, caused by the heavy strain to which he had been subjected for at least six years. His death was recognised as a world-disaster.

His task of combating the strong isolationist elements in America, which would have kept the United States out of the war and so ensured a Fascist triumph, had been accomplished. But his influence in post-war councils was equally needed. Under the American Constitution the Vice-President steps into a dead President's place without election. Vice-President Truman was therefore at once sworn in to the presidential chair. His first act was to request Marshal Stalin that the Soviet arrangements might be altered by sending Mr Molotov to San Francisco. To this request Stalin instantly agreed.

The conference met also under the shadow of very serious disagreement between the American-British and the Soviet plans for Poland. At Yalta, as has been stated, a compromise had been reached whereby the Lublin Committee would be recognised as the Government of Poland, provided that it was enlarged and reconstituted so as to make it representative of the Polish nation as a whole. In practice the two interpretations of that compromise were found to be widely variant. Moscow wished to see Lublin represented immediately at the conference and to leave to the Lublin Committee the power of decision as to what changes should be made in the composition of its personnel. America and Britain maintained that the Lublin Government was undemocratic and that until drastic changes had been made in its composition, it should not be allowed to send a delegate to San Francisco. Mr Molotov retaliated by demanding that, if Poland was to be excluded on account of Allied doubts as to her democracy, the Argentine should for similar reasons be refused representation. Here the Soviet argument was unanswerable: Argentina had for some time accepted a nakedly Fascist regime, which the American and British Governments had regrettably decided to recognise. Against this must be set the British-American complaint that the Soviet Union had set up a Government in Austria without consulting the Allies: the composition of this Government, however, fairly reflected the Social Democrat and Christian Socialist factors which had prevailed in Vienna before the Dollfuss dictatorship.

The Polish issue was even more gravely aggravated by Molotov's disclosures that the Polish politicians who had

gone to Russia to discuss the enlargement of the Polish Government and who had previously been reported 'missing,' had in fact been arrested for alleged 'diversionary activities' against the Red Army. General Okulicki was apparently considered to be the main culprit. A major crisis was inevitably precipitated. Whatever the ground for the charges, the Soviet action in imprisoning a delegation for which safe conduct might have been presumed, played directly into the hands of the enemies of the Soviet Union and could but revive the old suspicions which Soviet friends hoped had by now been buried. A bad impression was also necessarily created by the failure of the Soviet Government to announce until May the fate of this party: from the end of March the Soviet authorities had denied knowledge as to what had happened, in spite of continual British inquiries.

Other problems emerged in the course of the opening discussion. Whereas the status of the five Great Powers was amply guaranteed by permanent seats on the Security Council, many of the smaller States complained that the proposed voting-procedure on the Security Council virtually ~~set~~ the Big Powers above the law by enabling any one of them to veto collective action against itself or its patrons. The 'middle' States also voiced their demand for a further share in shaping world-policy than the proposed constitution promised to give them. Holland urged that more seats on the Council should be given to the smaller States, and that the consent of one half of them should be required before taking a decision. France suggested that three of the six non-permanent seats on the Council should be reserved for those States willing to take an active part in the defence of international order.

Evidently, despite the single need which was common to all peoples, there would be many controversial disagreements to be tackled in the near future. The nations were not entering on their formidable task with anything like a hundred-per-cent. unanimity. This and some obvious defects in the Dumbarton Oaks scheme were ominous clouds on the horizon. Yet it is well to remind ourselves that this consciousness of the difficulties and of the existence of rival claims may have been a more hopeful augury than the idealism which had prevailed in Europe when the League of Nations was first constituted. The world was no longer



in utopian mood: it was disillusioned and sceptical as a result of bitter experience. And if this realism could be turned to constructive use it might well prove a more solid basis for world-development than an attitude which had assumed all too easily that merely by the signing of treaties or through the function of a constitutional organization a reign of universal peace could instantly be achieved.

### *The surrender of Germany*

Each day in this last dramatic phase the agony of Germany reached nearer to a stage of utter destruction. The chief criminals in the world-tragedy now suffered the penalties of defeat. First, the aged Pétain voluntarily crossed the Swiss-French frontier to deliver himself into the hands of his countrymen, an action so calculated to embarrass the French Government, in view of his ninety years, that rumour attributed it to the cunning device of Nazi politicians. The trickster Laval sought vainly for sanctuary in Switzerland. Mussolini and his mistress were caught by Italian partisans near Lake Como. The former dictator wore a German uniform-overcoat and was endeavouring to escape. He was shot in the back, and his corpse, together with that of his mistress, hung in a public square in Milan, where Italians who had suffered under his tyranny fired revolver shots and spat upon it in derision: a horrible end, but an expression of rough mob-justice. General Dittmar and his son ferried themselves across the Elbe, displaying a white flag, and surrendered. Von Rundstedt was captured on May 1. Even more sensational was the news that in the early hours of April 24 Himmler had met Count Bernadotte of Sweden, a descendant of one of Napoleon's marshals, and had entrusted him as a plenipotentiary conveying terms of German surrender to America and Britain, but not to the Soviet Union. Himmler added the information that Hitler was suffering from brain-hæmorrhage and could not live more than two days. This last moment attempt to divide the Allies was at once repudiated by the American and British Governments who replied that there must be total surrender without discrimination. On May 1 the German radio announced to the German people that Hitler

was dead and that Admiral Doenitz was appointed Fuehrer in his stead. The endeavours of the radio-propaganda to pretend that Hitler had died heroically in battle was inconsistent with Himmler's earlier announcement.

The student of history at some future age may ask why the Nazis should ever have resolved to continue the struggle to the end, once the outcome was determined. Had they surrendered in 1944, when the Allied invasion in the west could no longer be checked and encirclement from west and east was therefore inevitable, they might have entertained some hopes at least of preserving their machinery, and, however complete the Allied occupation, thus have prepared the way for launching a third war. The policy of continued and hopeless resistance ensured the total destruction of Germany and the entire collapse of the Nazi system, as reflected in the deaths and surrenders and captures of the various leaders. Never before has there been so gigantic a military defeat as Germany deliberately suffered in 1945. Even if the Allies had been reckless enough to leave Germany free to rearm herself after the surrender, there could have been no possibility of her military revival for a long term of years.

The Allies were thus relieved of one serious problem. The strictest supervision and disarmament of a comparatively undamaged enemy would have been far from easy: but as a result of this desperate tactic Germany ensured that she should be utterly destroyed. In 1918 the Germans claimed that their armies were undefeated and that they lost the war only because of a 'stab in the back.' In the second world-war, with all the immense advantages of six years' war preparation, they had been beaten at their own game and no such excuse was open to them.

Why then should they have persisted in suicide and the ruin of their fatherland? The answer is beyond doubt. The Nazi leaders were never statesmen: they were essentially men of gangster-mentality. They instinctively preferred the way of going down shooting to the last, with a callous indifference to the fate of Germany or the German people. Characteristically also, the final act was not that of martyrdom. They did not die, fighting side by side, comrades to the last in their devotion to a cause for which they were willing to make the supreme sacrifice. The end was the

sordid confusion of thwarted gamblers. The bodies of Goebbels and his wife were found in Berlin; they had committed suicide. Hitler and Bormann had also destroyed themselves. Goering was captured. Himmler's bid for negotiations was evidently a last effort to wrest power from Doenitz.

There was some doubt as to whether Doenitz would attempt to rally the naval factions and prolong the war by waging a submarine campaign from Norwegian bases. But the German collapse was now too complete to be arrested. Towns, cities—among them Hamburg on May 3—military units, were surrendering each hour on their own responsibility. Dresden was captured by the Soviet forces on May 8. The last battle on the west front was at Tangermunde on the Elbe. On the same day 40,000 men, remnants of the Berlin army, handed themselves over to the Americans after an abortive attempt to escape. On Monday morning, May 7, 1945, at 2.41 General Jodl, representing the German High Command, signed an act of unconditional surrender of all land, sea and air forces, at General Eisenhower's headquarters at Rheims, in the presence of General Bedell Smith, Chief of Staff of the Allied Expeditionary Force, General Francois Sevez, and General Susloparov—representing the Soviet High Command. This was ratified at Berlin on May 9 by Air Chief Marshal Tedder, General de Tassigny, General Spaatz and Marshal Zhukov: the German representative was Keitel. The war officially concluded at a minute past midnight (double-summer-time) on May 8, but the 'Cease Fire' was sounded at once. There was still sporadic fighting, where S.S. men ignored or were uninformed of the capitulation. In Prague, where the partisans rose on May 5, fierce street-fighting continued for some days. On Tuesday, May 8, 1945, VE-day was celebrated throughout Britain. The struggle in Europe was at an end.

### *The surrender of Japan*

The general expectation at the close of the European struggle was that war in the Far East would be prolonged for a considerable period: heavy as the accumulated losses of the Japanese had become, and evident as was their

inability to launch any further offensive, the area to be reconquered and the invasion of Japan itself suggested a lengthy and costly campaign. By the summer of 1945, however, the position of the enemy was already far more desperate than was popularly realised. Heavy air-attacks were being launched almost daily on ports and shipping on the Japanese coast: in the two weeks preceding July 23, 416 ships had been sunk or damaged and 556 aircraft destroyed. On July 27 and 28 an immense blow was delivered on the Japanese navy, the effect of which was to incapacitate every large warship. On July 31 enemy losses in three weeks alone were announced to be 1,023 surface ships and 1,257 aircraft. On August 1, 820 B 29s dropped 6,630 tons of bombs on five cities, and all the occupied ports had been mined from Korea along the mainland and around the islands.

Meanwhile, the various military campaigns showed everywhere a steady advance. In Borneo Allied troops were advancing towards Samarinda. In New Guinea a whole enemy division had been wiped out by August 1, and the chief base on the island captured. Sinning, in south-west Kwangsi, was captured by the Chinese on August 4, thus depriving the enemy of their main base for protecting their western flank in Indo-China. In Burma the Japanese forces were in full retreat and had failed to hold their escape-corridor to the Sittang: only a few remnants had succeeded in crossing the river. On August 8, the date which had already been agreed upon by the Big Three, the Soviet Union entered the Far Eastern war, the Mongolian Eastern Republic declaring war on August 13. By August 19 the Red Army had occupied Harbin and Mukden, and had occupied most of northern Manchuria. On August 23 the whole of Manchuria was announced to be in Russian hands.

An urgent proclamation to the Japanese people was issued from Potsdam on July 26 in the names of President Truman, Mr Churchill and General Chiang Kai-Shek. It warned the people of immense impending destruction unless Japan surrendered without delay: it declared that Japanese sovereignty would be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku, according to the previous Cairo pronouncement: that the authorities

which had led Japan to embark on a bid for world-conquest must be completely eliminated, that the Japanese forces after being disarmed would be allowed to return home and given the opportunity of leading peaceful and productive lives, and that there was no intention of enslaving the nation, but, on the contrary, that freedom of speech, religion and thought would be guaranteed.

Further warnings were issued. On July 27, 60,000 leaflets were dropped on eleven Japanese cities, on the 31st on twelve other towns, and on August 4 on a further eight. On August 5 the supreme blow was delivered. For many years scientists had been exploring the possibilities of splitting the atom and releasing atomic energy. American and British scientists had by this fateful summer carried their experiments sufficiently far to create the atomic bomb. This fearful weapon was employed at Hiroshima, with the result that more than four square miles of the city were obliterated. Three million leaflets were dropped by American airmen before the second blow was delivered, calling on the Japanese to petition their Emperor to sue for peace. Nagasaki was the second target, the bomb exploding on August 9.

In many quarters severe criticism was levied against the Allied leaders for employing so terrible an organ of destruction. It could certainly not be argued that the method was one of painless extinction: on the contrary, in the regions immediately beyond the affected zone great human suffering was caused in the form of disease and wounds. Against this must be set the fact that the use of the bomb precipitated the end of the war, thus saving many lives on both sides, and that, in any event, pre-atomic bombardment had already accounted, according to Japanese estimates, for ten million dead.

We cannot enter here into an involved moral controversy, nor can we do more than emphasise in bare outline the significance of this stupendous discovery. August 1945, marks the opening of the most critical stage in man's career. The power which he has now within his grasp is sufficient to blast civilization. It has transformed at one stroke the tactics of war: henceforward armies and navies can play probably no more than a subsidiary role. It has opened up fresh vistas, untold possibilities of production and loco-

motion, too vast for ordinary human imagination to comprehend. It throws at once a critical responsibility on the human race, the question whether man must destroy himself by the dreadful weapon which he has constructed or whether he has become mature enough to forswear war and apply this new store of energy to beneficial ends.

These are problems whose discussion and solution stretch far outside the pages of this short history. It is enough for our purpose to record that, faced now by the prospect of virtual annihilation, the Japanese Emperor broadcast an announcement of surrender on August 14. Hostilities, however, did not automatically cease: in Java the 'cease fire' was not sounded until the 19th, and only on the 21st was the capitulation of enemy forces in Manchuria received.

V J-day was celebrated on August 15, 1945. Little more than three months after the German capitulation the Second World War had come to an end.

### *The dawn of a new civilization*

There is no final chapter in history. There is no point at which the recorder of a history can lay down his pen, satisfied that his task is complete. The finale which he selects must be artificial, insofar as he knows that numberless issues remain unresolved, that many of the problems with which he has been concerned still await solution, that the long sequence of events which he has traced from 1918 reaches no definite goal in 1945.

Nor, in an upheaval of this immensity, is it easy to discover a conclusion on which any moral peroration can suitably be based. Those who attribute the world-crisis merely to the German attempt to gain domination, and who therefore fasten the guilt of the catastrophe solely on Nazi shoulders, can close the story with the pæan of victory and the defeat of the enemy. But this is an over-simplification, for they are confusing immediate happenings with fundamental causes. This superficial view is dangerous, since it leads those who adopt it to assume that the main task of the United Nations is to keep Germany and Japan in subjection, and that, provided this task is effectually

fulfilled, the challenge to peace and democratic liberty is removed. This theory will almost certainly be disproved by the experience of the coming years. We are likely to find that our responsibility is much less facile than would be that of recovery from the devastation of a totalitarian war. We shall, indeed, be forced to realise that mankind has entered an era of acute unsettlement and that the war has been no more than a prelude to that ordeal.

Those who think less superficially and who are conscious that something much more profound has been happening to mankind than a conflict of the traditional type, such as is caused by the rival territorial claims of two groups of countries, will envisage the world-crisis as the symptom of the decay of one phase of human civilization. They will ask what are the elements in our civilization which have caused the decay and brought about its collapse. And, in the process of their analysis, they will appreciate that the outstanding feature of our society is that it has been based on the design of endowing a minority of individuals with the ownership of the sources of wealth, the land, the raw material, the machinery which translates this material into saleable goods, and the financial organization which controls the purchase and distribution of these goods. This social order has carried with it certain inevitable consequences. It has divided mankind into a class of owner and a class which is dependent on employment by the owners. It has produced vast combines and monopolies, controlling particular fields of industry in order to eradicate competition among themselves. And this enormous concentration of economic power into entrenched interests has accentuated the development of the modern competitive State. The direction of our civilization has been set consistently towards the building-up of empires and political-economic spheres of influence. It has resulted in a net-work of separate nationalisms at war economically with each other in their struggle to secure as large a portion as possible of the world-market. The tendency of the combine-owners to establish cartels and to collaborate internationally in their own interests has not succeeded in averting the clash of these rival nationalisms.

Such a type of civilization must, in fact, under any circumstances have resulted in regular outbursts of military

war, and finally, therefore, in its own destruction: for modern warfare becomes increasingly destructive, and the atomic bomb reveals the unlimited scope of any future conflict. But there is evident, as we survey the whole range of human evolution, a further tendency which must be taken into account. Hitherto, in pre-feudal, in feudal and in capitalist civilizations, the social design has compelled the vast majority of the population to be economically and therefore politically subservient to those who held the wealth. So long as they remained politically illiterate, this majority could be relied upon to acquiesce in the terms of their own servility: they did not conceive the possibility of creating a different social order. Once, however, the right of education was conceded to them, the doom of the wealth-owners was sealed. Henceforward, the history of human development must be a movement in which the masses increasingly deny the right of any special class of individuals to a preferential standard of living, and themselves claim extended powers and share in the control of the social organism. This movement has been slow: its stages may be reckoned in the middle-class victory of the Reform Act in the first half of the nineteenth century, and, in Europe, in the French Revolution. It received an enormous impetus through the sensational achievement of the Soviet Revolution: the common man became aware that, contrary to what he had hitherto been told, it would be quite possible to construct a civilization without private employers, and that indeed greater efficiency in supplying the necessities of life could be ensured if the sources of wealth were placed under a common ownership, if production and distribution were planned for public use and not for private profit, and if the directors of industry were not employers, but, like the managers, employees of the public service.

A civilization constructed on a class-basis cannot be stable once the majority-class have become dissatisfied with it, and persuaded that such an order is unnecessary. The large industrialist and financial interests accordingly viewed the probable spread of what was loosely described as 'bolshevism' or 'communism' with the gravest alarm. Eventually there could be but one way of preventing this challenge to proprietary rights from maturing: the political



democratic liberty of the majority, the weapon by which the majority would be enabled ultimately to enforce their demands, must be restricted. In Germany this anti-democratic, fascist regime could take easy root on account of the humiliating consequences of Germany's defeat in the last war and the pretext that only by rigorous war-preparation and defiance of the richer imperial Powers could full employment and recovery from frustration be guaranteed. The financier-industrialists of Germany supported Hitler, recognising that by such measures alone could the socialist menace be averted.

For the same reason their contemporaries in other countries were disposed to approve and welcome the emergence of fascist authoritarianism. In Britain, as we have seen, up to the eve of the war British statesmen were convinced that the real peril would come from the Soviet Union and the Left, and were ready to appease Hitler and to express a benevolent neutrality towards his activities, provided he would turn east and destroy the Soviet forces. Even when he had turned west, the industrialist-class in France viewed surrender to Hitler as preferable to the continuance of the war in a form which would inevitably evolve into a popular revolutionary struggle. But in Britain the choice of the Conservatives was otherwise. Faced with the threat to British imperial-commercial interests, they fought on, at the significant price of becoming allied and heavily indebted to the Soviet Union for the final victory.

There are two comments which may suitably be offered in these closing pages. The first is that, if this interpretation of the world-upheaval is in any sense correct, we cannot regard Fascism, either in its Nazi or non-German forms, as an exotic foreign growth. It is our own civilization, exaggerated into a desperate and extreme shape, projected into the only shape, in fact, through which it can preserve itself against the socialist tide. And, consequently, if in Britain we decided to resist the revolutionary changes which a new socialist civilization involves, we should be compelled to organize our society on a similar anti-democratic basis, even though such an organization differed from the system which we have overthrown in Germany, so far as its more violent and obnoxious features are concerned.

Secondly, and conversely, it follows that if we are to attempt to preserve our political democracy, we can do so only by adopting a form of civilization grounded on a Socialist model. We, in common with the rest of humanity, stand at a junction of roads. If we are to advance to a stage in our social development where there is to be a reasonable prospect of avoiding war, of raising the general level of living and of providing full employment, the next phase of civilization must be equalitarian in character. We must create this new order, realising that it implies a revolution in the cultural, religious and moral, as well as in the political and economic spheres. We must be prepared to embark on an undertaking which will necessitate unsettlement and struggle, and which promises no easy path and no perfectionist utopia. We cannot guarantee our future. But, at least, we may be forewarned that if we refuse to undertake this formidable responsibility we are condemning our children to a fate which will be more grievous than any which we ourselves have endured. The creation of a new civilization is no light task: it is a path laden with pitfalls. But a nation such as the British people, which has revealed a virility, a courage and an efficiency capable of holding the pass for liberty through dark years of crippling disaster, is capable also of this greater achievement—once there is born within its heart a burning faith and an unflinching will—the determination to build a society in which the wealth and the opportunities of the world are not the possession of a few but are at the disposal of all, and to press forward with this effort whatever the sacrifices entailed.

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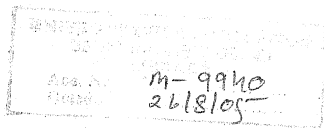
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